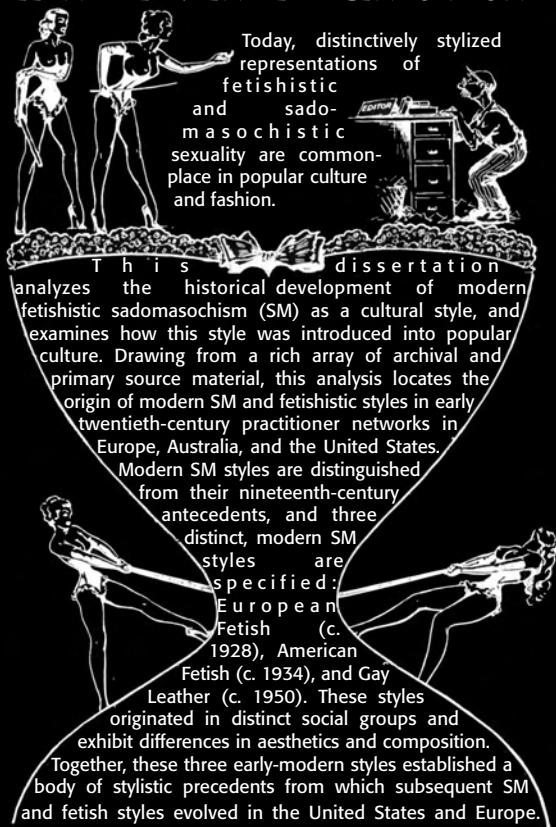


THE DEVELOPMENT OF SADOMASOCHISM AS A CULTURAL STYLE IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY UNITED STATES



THE DEVELOPMENT OF SADOMASOCHISM
AS A CULTURAL STYLE IN THE
TWENTIETH-CENTURY
UNITED STATES

Robert V. Bienvenu II

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy
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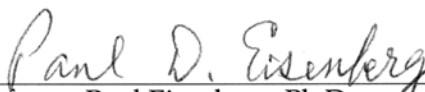
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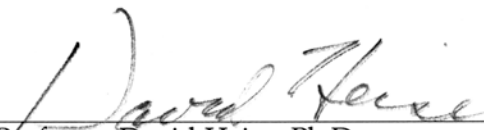
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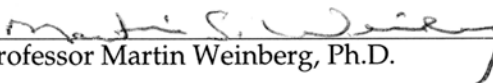
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This dissertation is dedicated to Beth Bienvenu

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Abstract

Today, distinctively stylized representations of fetishistic and sadomasochistic sexuality are commonplace in popular culture and fashion. This dissertation analyzes the historical development of modern fetishistic sadomasochism (SM) as a cultural style, and examines how this style was introduced into popular culture.

Drawing from a rich array of archival and primary source material, this analysis locates the origin of modern SM and fetishistic styles in early twentieth-century practitioner networks in Europe, Australia, and the United States. Modern SM styles are distinguished from their nineteenth-century antecedents, and three distinct, modern SM styles are specified: European Fetish (c. 1928), American Fetish (c. 1934), and Gay Leather (c. 1950). These styles originated in distinct social groups and exhibit differences in aesthetics and composition. Together, these three early-modern styles established a body of stylistic precedents from which subsequent SM and fetish styles evolved, both in sexual subcultures and in late twentieth-century popular culture. The focus of the dissertation is on the development of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles in the United States from 1933-1971.

The general explanatory approach used in the dissertation is the production-of-culture framework in the sociology of culture. This approach has previously been used in historical explanations of the development of styles in art. It is used here to explain the development of style associated with a category of sexuality. Variations in the aesthetics and conventions of SM styles are explained in terms of processes such as the historical development of practitioner networks and social circles, the economics of the production and distribution of SM and fetishistic erotica, and the political, legal, technological, and institutional contexts in which fetishistic materials have been produced, consumed, and constrained by agencies of social control.

Auszug

Heutzutage sind ausgeprägte Darstellungen der fetischistischen und sadomasochistischen Sexualität alltäglich im allgemeinen Kultur- und Modeverständnis. Diese Dissertation analysiert die historische Entwicklung des modernen fetischistischen Sadomasochismus (SM) zu einem kulturellen Lebensstil und untersucht, wie dieser Lebensstil in das Kulturleben eingeführt wurde.

Diese Analyse stützt sich auf eine große Menge an Archiv- und Erstquellenmaterial und ermittelt den Beginn des modernen SM und der fetischistischen Lebensstile in verschiedenen netzwerkartigen Gruppen, die diesen Lebensstil in Europa, Australien und den Vereinigten Staaten Anfang der zwanziger Jahre praktizieren. Die modernen SM Stile werden von deren Vorgängern im 19. Jahrhundert unterschieden, so daß sich drei ausgeprägte, moderne SM Stile herauskristallisieren: Europäischer Fetisch (c. 1928), Amerikanischer Fetisch (c. 1934), und Gay Leather (c. 1950). Diese Lebensstile hatten ihre Anfänge in bestimmten sozialen Gruppen und zeigen Unterschiede in Ästhetik und Zusammensetzung. Zusammen wurden diese drei frühen, modernen Stile zu einem stylistischen Vorreiter, aus dem sich die nachfolgenden SM und Fetischstile entwickelten, beide in sexuellen Subkulturen und im allgemeine Kulturleben des späten zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts. Der Fokus dieser Dissertation liegt auf der Entwicklung des Amerikanischen Fetisch und Gay Leather in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika von 1933-1971.

Die allgemeine, erläuternde Behandlung dieses Themas in dieser Dissertation ist der Rahmen für die Produktion-von-Kultur in der Soziologie der Kultur und wurde bereits in historischen Erklärungen über die Entwicklung der verschiedenen Kunststile angewendet. Hier wird die Entwicklung von Stilen, die mit einer bestimmten Kategorie der Sexualität verbunden sind, behandelt. Variationen in Ästhetik und Konventionen der SM Stile werden mit verschiedenen Vorgängen erklärt, wie z. B. der historischen Entwicklung der netzwerkartigen Gruppen von Praktizierenden und sozialen Kreisen, die wirtschaftliche Seite der Produktion und des Vertriebs von SM und fetischistischen Erotika sowie die politischen, gesetzlichen, technologischen, und institutionellen Zusammenhänge, in denen fetischistische Materialien produziert, konsumiert und von sozialen Kontrollmechanismen eingeschränkt wurden.

Résumé

Aujourd'hui la représentation claire et stylisée de la sexualité fétichiste et sadomasochiste est devenue répandue dans la culture et la mode populaire. Cette dissertation analyse le développement historique du sadomasochisme fétichiste (S.M.) moderne comme genre culturel, et examine comment ce genre a été introduit dans la culture populaire.

Sur la base d'une quantité importante de documents d'archives et de premières sources, cette analyse constate que le début du sadomasochisme moderne et du fétichisme remonte à l'apparition de groupes de personnes organisés en réseau qui pratiquaient ce genre de vie au début du 20^{ième} siècle en Europe, Australie et aux Etats-Unis. Une distinction est faite entre les genres du S.M. moderne et les formes précédentes au 19^{ième} siècle; on discerne trois types différents de S.M. moderne: le fétichisme européen (1928), le fétichisme américain (1934) et le Gay Leather (1950). Ces genres sont issus de différentes classes sociales et se distinguent entre eux par l'attitude esthétique et par leur composition. A partir de ces trois précédents genres, se sont ensuite développés le S.M. et le fétichisme, aussi bien dans des sous-cultures sexuelles que dans la culture populaire de la fin de ce siècle. La dissertation se focalise sur le développement du fétichisme américain et du Gay Leather aux États-Unis de 1933 à 1971.

L'approche générique et explicative de cette dissertation correspond à l'idée de la "production de culture" dans la sociologie de culture. Cette approche a déjà servi à expliquer le développement historique des styles différents dans l'art. Dans notre cas, elle est utilisée afin d'expliquer l'évolution d'un style associé à une certaine catégorie sexuelle. La diversité que les différents styles S.M. manifeste en ce qui concerne leur attitude esthétique et leur conventions s'explique par des processus spécifiques comme le développement historique des pratiquants (organisés en réseaux) et des milieux sociaux; le côté économique de la production et de la distribution d'accessoires S.M. et fétichistes; le contexte politique, légal, technologique et institutionnel dans lequel les articles fétichistes sont produits, consommés, et soumis à des restrictions imposées par des organismes de contrôle social.

Resumen

Hoy en día detalladas descripciones acerca de la sexualidad fetichista y sadomasojista forman parte de la moda y cultura en que vivimos. En esta tesis se analizará el desarrollo histórico del sadomasojismo fetichista moderno, que llega a ser un estilo de nuestra vida cultural, y su introducción en la cultura popular.

El análisis está basado en una gran cantidad de material de archivo así como de fuentes directas. Describe los comienzos del SM moderno y los estilos de vida fetichistas en una red de diferentes grupos que practicaron este estilo de vida en Europa, Australia y Estados Unidos a principios del siglo XX. Los estilos modernos del SM se diferencian de sus predecesores en el siglo XVIII de forma que se han podido resumir en tres estilos típicos y modernos del SM: el Fetiche Europeo (1928), el Fetiche Americano (1934), y el Gay Leather (1950). Estos estilos de vida comenzaron a practicarse en determinados grupos sociales y muestran diferencias en su estética y composición. Juntos, estos tres primeros estilos modernos se convirtieron en un guía estilístico de los que se desarrollaron los subsiguientes estilos SM y fetichistas, ambos en subculturas sexuales y en la vida cultural general de finales del siglo XX. Esta tesis enfoca el desarrollo del fetiche americano y „Gay Leather“ en Estados Unidos entre 1933 y 1971.

El tema de la tesis es tratado de forma general y contiene aclaraciones adicionales de forma que crea un marco para la producción de cultura en la sociología de la cultura. Esta manera de proceder ya puede observarse en otras aclaraciones históricas sobre el desarrollo de los diferentes estilos de arte. Aquí se tratará el desarrollo de estilos que están conectados con una determinada categoría sexual. Se explicarán los diferentes procesos en la variación, en la estética y convenciones de los estilos SM de forma diferente, como por ejemplo el desarrollo histórico de los que practican SM, así como diferentes grupos sociales, la parte económica de la producción y comercialización de productos eróticos SM y fetichistas así como el contexto político, legal, tecnológico e institucional en el que se produjeron y consumieron materiales fetichistas los cuales a su vez fueron limitados con ayuda de mecanismos de control sociales.

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Abbreviations

CNOL	Bishop John Noll Papers, Notre Dame Archives
GK	Gemini-Klein Collection, Chicago, IL
JBR	J.B. Rund collection
KIRSGR	Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction
LA&M	Leather Archives & Museum, Chicago, IL
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
NARA—NE	National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Region, New York, NY
PC	Private Collection/Public Domain (All images in this category are in the public domain or conform to “Fair Use” guidelines)
PHGA	Paul H. Gebhard Correspondence, Archives of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction
RB	Robert Bienvenu personal files (documents obtained from consultants and various non-archival sources)
USPOL	United States Post Office Library, Washington, D.C.

List of pseudonyms used in the dissertation

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Chapter One: Introduction: Three Modern SM Styles

Sadomasochism (SM) is a topic that has been explored and theorized from a number of perspectives during the past century. This dissertation provides an historical explanation of the development of SM as a modern cultural style. I approach this problem from a sociology of culture perspective, drawing from the *production of culture* explanatory framework. The production of culture frame focuses attention on particular social-organizational contexts in which cultural products are intentionally produced at the hand of artists, craftsmen, and businessmen (Peterson 1976). It explains the genesis of cultural phenomena in terms of processes such as the historical development of networks and social circles (Crane 1987; Kadushin 1976), artistic conventions and practice (Becker 1982; Rosenblum 1978), the economics of the production and distribution of cultural products (Becker 1982; Crane 1987), and the broader political and institutional contexts in which cultural products are produced, consumed, and constrained by agencies of social control (Becker 1982; DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976). As I elaborate below, in many ways the social and organizational processes through which SM developed as a cultural phenomenon are very similar to the development of distinctive cultural styles in other social domains. The world of art is a close analogue.

The modern SM style, whose features I introduce in the next section, emerged in Europe in the early twentieth century. I shall be concerned in this dissertation with the *three* major variants of the modern SM style found prior to 1971: *European Fetish* (c. 1928); *American Fetish* (c. 1934/1938); and *Gay Leather* (c. 1950). These styles are distinguished on both aesthetic and social-organizational grounds. Each originated in distinct social groups, exhibit

qualitative differences in their composition, followed different developmental trajectories, and together established a body of stylistic precedents from which subsequent SM and fetish styles evolved. The different trajectories of development of the two American styles allow for a comparative dimension of the analysis within the United States.

1.1 Structure, geographic and temporal boundaries of the study

European antecedents to modern SM styles date from the nineteenth century. My analysis focuses on the cultural development of SM in the United States from 1930-1971, although chapter two is devoted to the first “modern” SM style, the European Fetish style. The reason I focus on this forty year period is that the earliest evidence for the existence of SM subcultures and the production of SM erotica in a modern style in the United States is found in the early 1930’s, in New York City. There are two primary reasons for closure in 1971.

In 1971 organizational milestones occurred in the subcultural development of sadomasochism that marked the opening of a new epoch in its history. In Chicago in 1971 the first social club explicitly organized for the purpose of gay SM was formed: the Chicago Hellfire Club. In New York City in 1971 the first public support organization for sadomasochists (initially only masochists) was formed: the Till Eulenspiegel Society (TES). From this point forward, the configuration of sadomasochism as a subcultural phenomenon shifts as a new set of actors, networks, and opponents of SM come into play. These prominently include SM organizations ranging from social clubs and support groups to political action organizations. During the post-1971 period internal and inter-organizational developments and struggles play a key role in

defining meanings of SM, and a new set of cultural adversaries emerge such as anti-pornography cultural feminists (Dworkin [1979] 1989; Linden et al. 1982; Reti 1993; Seidman 1992; Vance 1992). In addition, in the 1980's AIDS significantly affected the development of SM (Rubin 1990, 1994). An analysis of this later period would require a dissertation in itself, and would have a quite different texture than an analysis of the first forty years of SM in the United States.

More directly, my analysis concludes in 1971 because the conventions associated with SM style were largely established. During the post-1971 period SM-fetish styles have been widely publicized and appropriated in popular culture, a trend that began in the late 1930's and accelerated during the 1960's (Steele 1996). However, the creative period during which these were formed antedates by decades their appropriation into popular culture.¹

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. In this first chapter I introduce the topic, describe the historical SM styles to be explained, and lay out the theoretical framework. At the end of the first chapter I review the study methodology and empirical sources.

In the second chapter, *The Genesis of the European Fetish Style*, I turn to the empirical analysis. Here I provide an overview of major producers of sadomasochistic erotica outside of the United States to the beginning of the Second World War. This history provides essential background for the analysis of SM style in the United States that follows. I address developments in Britain, France, and Germany.

¹ For example, the *Leatherman's Handbook* by Larry Townsend, published in 1972, was the first major book about gay leather sexuality written from a practitioner perspective. This work describes a gay leather subculture whose practices and norms were by that time well established.

The third through fifth chapters focus on the development of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles within the United States. Chapter three, *Foundations of the American Fetish Style, 1930-1949*, addresses the first and second generation of producers and practitioners in the American Fetish style. During this period European-style SM-fetish erotica was produced for the first time in the United States. Chapter four, *The Production of the Bizarre World, 1950-1971*, continues analysis of the second generation of producers and practitioners in the predominately heterosexual American Fetish style.

Chapter five, *Development of the Gay Leather style*, focuses on the social-organizational foundations of the leather style and subculture in the United States. In section 5.5 of chapter five, “Appropriation of American Fetish and Gay Leather Styles in Popular Culture: 1960-1971,” I briefly address key events and structural changes that facilitated the appropriation of American Fetish and Gay Leather styles in popular culture and fashion during the 1960’s.

The sixth chapter, *Conclusion*, contrasts the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles and summarizes key findings of the dissertation.

1.2 Historical Framework: Three Modern SM Styles

Notions of *style* are to be found among the classical works of sociology, and are actively used today in a few specialized subfields of sociology. These include the sociology of art (e.g., Crane 1987; Rosenblum 1977); the sociology of knowledge, rooted in the work of the sociology of “styles of thought” of Karl Mannheim (cf. Nelson 1992; see also Hacking 1992); and critical studies of inequality that focus on the relationship between culture and social structure in the reproduction of hierarchical social structures (Hannerz 1969; MacLeod 1987; Swidler 1986; Willis 1977). The work of Pierre Bourdieu provides one of the most sophisticated theoretical articulations of this area of critical work.² To the best of my knowledge, however, style has not been employed as an organizing concept in the sociology of sexuality.

In this analysis I engage style in both social-organizational and aesthetic terms. The following sociological definition of style developed by Rosenblum addresses the descriptive-aesthetic dimension of style³ (Rosenblum 1978, p. 424):

² My focus in this dissertation is on the *genesis* of a cultural style rather than the social relationships that such styles impose on their bearers in broader social structural context. However, that problematic is one ripe for development elsewhere. Style, often framed in the literature in terms of “lifestyle” or “taste” (see Lamont and Fournier 1992) is a social feature that distinguishes groups and serves as an organizing principle of social difference and inequality. The concept is woven into a sophisticated cultural framework in the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, where style is a key expression of the *habitus* of different groups ([1972] 1977, p. 86-87; [1979] 1984, p. 55-57, 174-175; [1980] 1990; [1984] 1988).

³ I focus on the social-organizational dimension of style in my discussion of Crane (1987); see page 25 below. In the production of culture frame aesthetic content is framed as an outcome of social-organizational processes.

Style consists of particular mannerisms or conventions that are frequently associated together. Because of the frequency of association, we treat the entire combination as an identifiable whole which is generally consistent and stable over time and place. One sociologically useful way to think about style is that it consists of predictable combinations of features.

To recognize (or analyze) a style it is not necessary to specify each and every salient feature, and in this analysis I focus on a limited set of principal attributes of SM style.⁴ These are: (1) fetishistic composition, and (2) sexual practices and aesthetics. In this section I define these criteria and use them to distinguish the three modern SM styles from their nineteenth century antecedents. By way of introduction, I also provide a brief descriptive overview of the three modern styles themselves. Each of the modern styles is examined in depth in subsequent chapters.

In the context of the overall argument in the dissertation, the following descriptive overview serves to define the phenomena that are to be sociologically explained.

⁴ As philosopher of art Nelson Goodman points out, "...we normally come to grasp a style without being able to analyze it into component features. The test of our grasp lies in the sureness and sensitivity of our sorting of works" (Goodman 1978, p. 34).

1.21 Defining and Periodicizing “Modern” SM Styles

1.211 Criterion #1: Fetishistic Composition

The composition of fetishistic representations associated with SM style, both visual and literary, changed significantly between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. A framework that is very useful for conceptualizing this change is provided in an important 1969 article by Paul Gebhard entitled “Fetishism and Sadomasochism” (Gebhard [1969] 1976). Based on the experience of many years of fieldwork in SM subcultures, Gebhard made a number of trenchant observations about both sadomasochism and fetishism. Among these was a typology of fetishistic objects, which he related to SM. I appropriate this typology and place it, for the first time, in an historical framework. Used in the context of an historical analysis, Gebhard’s typology helps to clarify and illuminate key features of SM style, as well as changes in its composition over time.

At the beginning of his article Gebhard noted that sadomasochism and fetishistic materials are frequently linked phenomena ([1969] 1976, p. 156): ⁵

⁵ The fetishism-SM association is extensively noted in the literature addressing SM, and has been a sub-topic of investigation in a smaller number of quantitative analyses (e.g., Breslow et al. [1985] 1995, p. 264-265; Moser 1979, p. 46; Moser and Levitt [1987] 1995, p. 102; Spengler [1977] 1983, p. 68-69). The most extensive scientific investigation of the relationship between these two phenomena is found in a psychological study: Gosselin and Wilson’s book-length report, *Sexual Variations* (1980). Although Gosselin and Wilson have been criticized on methodological grounds (cf. Miale 1986, p. 46-47), the study is important and remains unique in the literature.

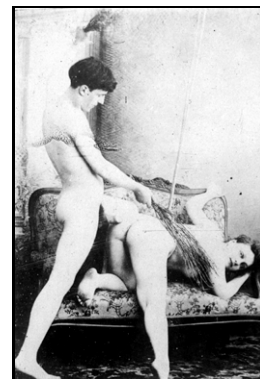


Figure 1: Late 19th century-unembellished flagellation, Europe c. 1890 (PC)



Figure 2: Late 20th century—fetishistic (hard media) SM. (*Sex* © 1992 by Madonna)

It is appropriate to consider these two phenomena together since they frequently intermingle. Sadomasochism very often incorporates fetishistic elements, and one may with justification regard much of the sadomasochistic paraphernalia as fetish objects since the sight or touch of these devices can engender sexual arousal. On the other hand, fetishism is less dependent on sadomasochism: one type of fetishism is almost devoid of it. However, these two phenomena share certain relationships.

Gebhard divided fetishistic materials into two types: *media* and *form*. *Form* fetishism focuses on very particular fetishized objects. Gebhard linked the following examples to sadomasochism: high heels, high boots, “black opera length gloves,” and corset fetishism (p. 160). The masochistic high heeled shoe fetishist, for example, is a *form* fetishist (p. 160). Gebhard pointed to recent changes in fashion that altered the cultural meaning of objects fetishized in SM contexts: “Until the recent fashion for them, high boots were the trademark of prostitutes specializing in sadomasochism” (p. 160). As noted below, the repertoire of particular objects that tend to be fetishized in SM contexts has changed over time.

A *media* fetish, in contrast, is one focused on the material substance of the fetish object. An example is leather fetishism, exemplified in cases where leather itself is of interest, whether it be in the form of jackets, gloves, etc..

Gebhard subdivided media fetishes into two categories: *hard* and *soft*. *Soft* media fetishes focus on materials that are “fluffy, frilly or soft in texture,” such as fur or lingerie (p. 159). Notwithstanding the famous literary example of Sacher-Masoch, whose masochistic protagonist Severin in *Venus in Furs* ([1870] 1989) was a soft media fetishist, Gebhard noted that soft



Figure 3: Modern form fetish (hard media): corset-boot-glove. Guyette (U.S.), c. 1934/1938 (Bélier Press)

media fetishism is *not* usually associated with SM. *Hard* media objects, in contrast, (p. 159):

...are generally smooth, slick, and with a hard metallic sheen. Leather, rubber, and lately plastics, exemplify this. Hard fetish items are often tight constructing garments or shoes, usually black. ... Hard media fetishism very frequently is associated with sadomasochism.

Classical icons of “hard” media fetishism include the dominatrix clad in latex, or the tough leatherman.

Between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries there was a significant transition in the composition of fetishistic SM representations from predominately soft media to hard media. Descriptions of “SM” in nineteenth century erotica, both visual and literary, as well as the classical sexological literature, tend to narrowly focus on soft media practices.⁶ This contrast between nineteenth and twentieth century representations of SM is most obvious in visual erotica with SM themes. Virtually without exception, models in nineteenth century images are clothed in either normal clothing, soft media in terms of Gebhard’s taxonomy, or are nude. This is in sharp contrast to twentieth century representations, particularly those from the late 1920’s and after, where SM and fetishistic images tend to emphasize or contain elements of hard media content, as well as particular fetishized objects that are themselves in hard media form, such as high boots and leather or rubber costume.

Although no previous work has attempted to explain this transition, it has been noted in the literature. For example, in

⁶ See Krafft-Ebing ([1903] 1965), p. 143-146, 162-184; Nazarieff 1992.

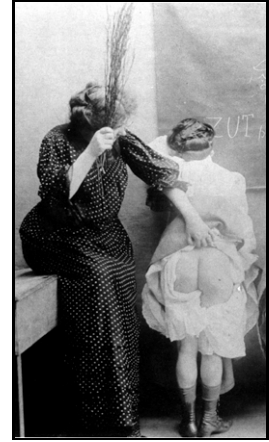


Figure 4: Soft media flagellation. European, c. 1870 (PC)



Figure 5: Soft media flagellation (corset). European, c. 1900 (PC)

their book-length comparative analysis of sadomasochists, fetishists, and transvestites, psychologists Gosselin and Wilson noted an historical shift toward hard media (1980, p. 47):

One of the curiosities about fetishistic activity these days is that the focus of attention appears to have changed. Classical case histories elicit a wide variety of “target” stimuli: parts of the body (hand, breast, foot, buttock, armpit, hair), body products (sweat, urine, blood), items of clothing (shoes and boots, handkerchiefs, stockings, underwear, corsets and the more general category of “uniforms”), materials (satin, velvet, leather, silk, plastic, rubber) and inanimate objects such as baby carriages, cigarette holders and pipes, even collar studs, safety pins, pieces of crystal and roses. Nowadays, however, fetishism directed toward parts of the body or to objects which are not items of clothing seems to have become limited to rare clinical presentations, while a focus on sexy underwear and a specialized range of garments in rubber, vinyl and leather appears to have occurred.



Figure 6: Hard media fetishistic SM (corset, glove, chastity belt., high-heeled shoe). France, Studio Biederer, c. 1930 (PC)

Cultural historian Valerie Steele (1996) also notes an historical shift from soft to hard media; she more pointedly writes (1996, p. 143):

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the focus was on soft materials, such as satin and fur, which are primarily associated with women’s clothing. But by the late twentieth century, hard materials, especially leather and rubber, have tended to dominate.

Images in this section illustrate obvious differences between nineteenth century and twentieth century images containing SM themes.

Form and media fetishism are not mutually exclusive, and there are many examples of overlap between the two. Historically, the most qualitatively sharp transition in SM style is the change from predominately soft media to hard media representations. This occurred worldwide in the late 1920’s and

1930's. In form fetishism there is a change in the repertoire of particular objects toward more “specialized”—i.e. explicitly kinky—costumes, as noted by Gosselin and Wilson (1980). There are also some historical continuities in the repertoire of objects fetishized, such as corsets. However, in the twentieth century, unlike the nineteenth, such form fetish objects tend to be composed of hard media materials.

1.212 Criterion #2: Changes in Sexual Practices, Aesthetics

A second feature that distinguishes modern SM styles from their antecedents is the increasing diversity and sophistication of practices. Modern SM practices are quite eclectic and characteristically entail finely calibrated technologies of physical and psychological stimulation—sophisticated forms of consensual “torture”—that are incorporated into SM role play (cf. Moser and Madeson 1996; Patrias 1978; Rubin 1994; Schiller 1986; Stoller 1991; Weinberg, M. et al. 1984; Weinberg, T. and Kamel 1983; Weinberg, T. 1995). These practices are often accompanied by fetishistic paraphernalia, as Paul Gebhard noted ([1969] 1976, p. 164):

Both sadomasochism and bondage are often replete with fetish items including specialized clothing and restraint or torture devices. All this offers the devotee substantial additional gratification. The average heterosexual or homosexual has relatively little paraphernalia for supplementary pleasure and it offers scant opportunity for ingenuity or creativity.

In contrast, antecedent “SM” practices, e.g., as reflected in nineteenth century erotic literature, have a much more narrow



Figure 7: Modern hard media bizarre, France, Studio Biederer, c. 1930 (PC)

range of topics and practices than found in the twentieth century. In addition, nineteenth century practices tend to have a much more limited range of paraphernalia. Related to this, a very different *aesthetic* of SM existed during the nineteenth century when compared to the twentieth.

The modal category of “SM” literature—and evidently practice—in the nineteenth century was flagellation (cf. Gibson 1978, Marcus 1964, Mendes 1993).⁷ Flagellation had a distinctive aesthetic quite different from that characteristic of modern SM styles. Commentators on the Victorian flagellation literature converge on a view of the practice as narrowly and rigidly structured, as well as endlessly repetitive. Gibson (1978, p. 265-268) notes a set of characteristic features of the “flagellation fantasy:” it is narrowly focused on the buttocks, the flagellation ritual emphasizes the uncovering of the buttocks of an otherwise clothed victim—a process described in great detail, the standard position of the victim is bent over, and the end result of reddened buttocks is stressed. The paraphernalia used tend to be restricted to a birch, called a “rod,” a whip, or cane (Marcus 1964, p. 256).

This paradigm structure is repeated again and again in the flagellation literature of the nineteenth century. As Gibson



Figure 8: Soft media flagellation, European c. 1905 (PC)

⁷ Mendes' (1993) extensive bibliography provides an overview of the content of English-language erotic fiction during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; see p. 469 for a thematic summary. Flagellation is the modal category of *all* English language erotic books during this period.

There were a limited number of other practices distinguished in nineteenth century “SM” literature. The most

notes (Gibson 1978, p. 269; for a concurring evaluation see Marcus 1964, p. 255-257):

The beatings described in pornography are, invariably, ritualistic in character. Nothing unforeseen is ever allowed to happen, and the ceremony, carried out with great solemnity, proceeds according to a set plan, any variation in which would result in a loss of meaning, power, and effectiveness: the spell would be broken, the magic dispersed. Spontaneity is totally absent from these performances.



Figure 9: Soft media flagellation, European, c. 1900 (PC)

A very different aesthetic emerged during the late nineteenth century and gradually became dominant during the twentieth. This aesthetic, called “bizarre” by early twentieth century practitioners, embraced a variety of practices and “kinks” which emphasized diversity and the intentional exploration of ever more creative possibilities for erotic expression. Whereas the result of the nineteenth century flagellation aesthetic was endless repetition of a narrow theme, the aesthetic of *bizarre* produced a proliferation of new practices, materials, paraphernalia, costumes, and meanings associated with SM. This was a practitioner-driven process.⁸

prominent example is fetishistic corsetry, called “tight-lacing” (cf. Kunzle 1982; Steele 1996, p. 57-89).

⁸ The medical conceptualization of such activities as pathological, as well as the medical terms “sadism,” “masochism,” “fetishism,” and “sadoomasochism,” was seldom used by practitioners until the *mid-twentieth* century. I discuss this below (see p. 49); see also Kunzle 1982, p. 257; Schiller 1987, p. 62.

The key period of transition from antecedent to modern SM styles is the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the period from approximately 1890 to the late 1920's a gradual but definite qualitative shift occurred in predominant SM practices, as well as the composition of their fetishistic accoutrements. The classical sexological literature, which dates from 1886,⁹ is replete with observations of diverse sexual practices found during this period. More helpful for dating this period of transition are studies such as Alain Corbin's analysis of nineteenth century French prostitution, which identifies an elaborative transition in practices offered in high-class French brothels, circa 1890, which equipped themselves with "a complete arsenal of sexual tortures" including various paraphernalia such as electric shock devices (Corbin [1978] 1990, p. 124).

As I will illustrate in chapter two below, elements of both the modern and antecedent styles were juxtaposed during this transitional period, with no truly sharp division until the late 1920's. During the late 1920's and 1930's, the European Fetish style took hold across the globe—from Germany to Australia. From this point forward, the modern bizarre aesthetic and style of hard media fetishistic representation has predominated and characterized SM styles. Although many variations on the seminal European Fetish style have emerged since the 1930's, its

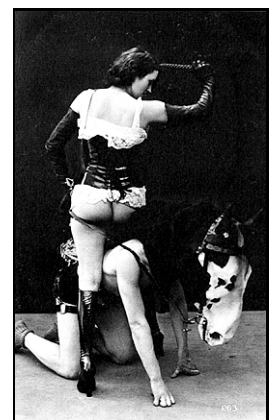


Figure 10: Bizarre costume, hard media. France, Studio Biederer, c. 1930 (PC)

⁹ The first (German) edition of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* was published in 1886. The first English-language translation of this work published in the United States was in 1893 (Katz 1995, p. 208, n. 4)

central features remain dominant today—both in SM subcultures and in related popular culture fashion and products.

1.22 Brief Profiles: The three modern SM styles

1.221 European Fetish

European Fetish is the term I have coined for a fetishistic SM style, primarily heterosexual in orientation, that is characterized by ubiquitous hard media fetishistic representations and an aesthetic of *bizarre*—entailing the exploration of diverse and unusual sexual practices. This style, elements of which are found in earlier erotica and literature, without question became the predominant style of SM representation beginning in the late 1920's. The earliest known erotica producers who specialized in the European Fetish style were German, followed quickly by French and British producers. I address and specify major producers in the style, by region, in chapter two. Among other differences, there were regional variations in the predominant media in which the style appeared. In Britain, the European Fetish style appeared primarily in fetish-oriented magazines; in France, in novels and avant-garde Parisian photography; and in Germany, predominately among a group of publishers and photographers loosely associated with the Weimar period German *Nacktkultur* movement.

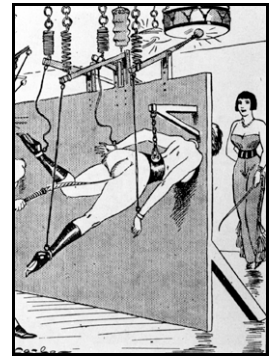


Figure 11: Early twentieth-century bizarre art by Carlo. France, c. 1930 (PC)

1.222 American Fetish

The *American Fetish* style, particularly in the 1930's and early 1940's, was similar in content to the European Fetish style. This is not surprising, as the first major producer in the United States was directly linked to German producers. During the 1930-1960 period key innovators of the American Fetish style were located in New York City, with imitators in a number of other locations, particularly California. Erotica producers in collaboration with early SM subcultural practitioners provided the social foundation for this style. I discuss the production of the American Fetish style in detail beginning in chapter three. From the late 1940's, SM erotica producers in the United States created a number of distinctive products for a largely heterosexual audience, including magazines and photography. Key themes included bizarre practices and fetishistic costume, bondage, transvestism, and female domination.



Figure 12: American Fetish, c. 1947 (PC)

1.223 Gay Leather

Gay Leather is a now prominent mid-twentieth century SM style that developed out of the gay leather subculture in the United States. The Gay Leather style developed in relative isolation from the European tradition that was dominant in heterosexual SM networks, in quite different organizational contexts. These were primarily motorcycle clubs and bars. In large cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago during



Figure 13: Early Gay Leather style. Kris Studio, c. 1960 (LA&M)

the 1950's, the decade when the Gay Leather style developed a distinct social-organizational infrastructure, these organizations as well as subcultural social networks linked practitioners. The motorcycle motif now associated with SM in popular culture is a well known component of the Gay Leather style.

Like *bizarre*, a Gay Leather aesthetic embraces development of novel practices, but the emphasis and configuration is different than in heterosexual SM styles. The Gay Leather style embraces a hyper-masculine, “butch” aesthetic that is self-consciously the antithesis of effeminate gay stereotypes (cf. Schiller 1987, Rubin 1994). Fetishistic expression is more narrow in the Gay Leather style than in heterosexual styles, and the Gay Leather style places heavier emphasis on physical play. Centers of the Gay Leather Style through the 1960's were New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Francisco.

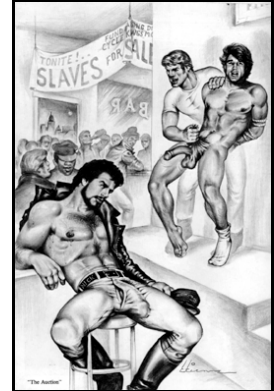


Figure 14: Etienne's "The Auction" (Dom Orejudos) (LA&M)

1.23 SM Styles and popular culture

Because I seek to explain the development of SM as a *cultural* style, as contrasted with the set of activities constituted by practitioners as SM, my analysis will extend outside of SM subcultures. Today SM styles are expressed in a wide spectrum of social contexts, including non-practitioner popular culture.¹⁰

¹⁰ “Practitioner” here refers to subcultural practitioner. See Ehrenreich et al. (1986) for an amusing account of a “tupperware-style” home party that introduced SM equipment to a group of middle-class, suburban women interested in spicing up their sex lives. It provides a nice illustration of the transition of SM practices from subcultural contexts to mainstream culture,

During the twentieth century stylistic innovations developed at the hands of early SM practitioners and erotica producers have become a cultural “resource” that has been appropriated in social contexts outside SM subcultures—such as fashion runways in New York City.¹¹ This is a very interesting area of cultural history, and where possible I will chart concrete linkages between early subcultural producers of SM style and producers of popular culture products.



Figure 15: *Skin Two* magazine, 1996 (PC)

Related to this, I note that while the SM subculture plays a very important role in my historical analysis, this dissertation is not designed to provide a sociological-historical analysis of the SM subculture[s]. This is a sociology of culture oriented analysis of the development of a cultural style, not a sociology of sexuality oriented analysis of particular erotic subcultures. Hence distinctions and issues germane to analyses of modern SM subcultures are not relevant in the same way here, such as the distinction between SM practitioners and non-SM leather fetishists. From the point of view of this dissertation, SM-fetish style is in some degree shared by both, and exists today independently of SM or fetish subcultures. My explanation of the development of SM style requires a focus on early subcultural

where “the perverse becomes the commonplace” (Ehrenreich et al., p. 111). This represents, to some degree, a popularization of the early “bizarre” aesthetic.

¹¹ Today there is an entire industry of hyper-stylized fashion and erotica producers who, perhaps without realizing it, shamelessly imitate the creative work of early twentieth-century producers of SM style. Steele (1996) has the best discussion of the late twentieth-century appropriation of SM-fetish subcultural motifs and paraphernalia in popular culture and fashion.

social networks and producers, and will incidentally entail the most complete historical profile of early SM subcultures available. I am pleased this is the case, so long as the reader is not confused about the goal of this analysis.

Summarizing the discussion above, on page 20 I provide a table that highlights differences and continuities among the three modern SM styles and their nineteenth century antecedent. Content addressed is through 1971.



Figure 16: Popular culture SM: A late twentieth-century juxtaposition of two classical SM styles: European Fetish and Gay Leather. (Mary Tyler Moore and Dick Van Dyke, © 1995 Annie Leibovitz Studio, New York, NY)

<i>Style</i> ➡ (date, point of origin) <i>Typical Manifestations</i> ➡	ANTECEDENT (19th, early 20th Centuries)	EUROPEAN FETISH (c. 1928)	AMERICAN FETISH (c. 1934/1938)	GAY LEATHER (c. 1950)
	Germany, France, Britain, Australia)	United States: New York City	United States: New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago	
	Addressed in Chapter 1	Addressed in Chapter 2	Addressed in Chap. 3-4	Addressed in Chap. 5
<i>Fetish: Media</i>	Predominant soft media: satin, velvet, fur.	Predominant hard media: leather, rubber, metal, PVC during 1960's	Predominant hard media: leather, metal (rubber and PVC during 1960's)	Hard media: (black) leather
<i>Fetish: Form</i>	Corsets, uniforms, shoes, underwear	Bizarre costume, macintoshes, uniforms, high-heeled shoes and boots, "one-legged girls," gloves	Bizarre costume, high-heeled shoes and boots	Motorcycle jackets, chaps, leather/levi combination, engineer boots, uniforms, belts
<i>Sexual Practices</i>	Limited repertoire: flagellation, birching, tight-lacing. Narrowly defined role play	"Bizarre" aesthetic: elaborated role play, bizarre apparatuses, female domination, transvestism, wrestling girls, human ponies, body piercings, tattooing	"Bizarre" aesthetic: elaborated SM role play, bizarre (including modern technological) apparatuses, female domination, bondage, humiliation, transvestism, transexualism, wrestling girls, human ponies	"Butch" aesthetic. Elaborated role play, humiliation, sophisticated forms of erotic torture; e.g. fisting, "CBT" cock and ball torture, watersports

Figure 17: Descriptive overview of antecedent and three modern SM styles

1.3 Theoretical Framework: A Production of culture approach to the analysis of sexual style

My explanation of the development of SM styles draws upon the theoretical framework defined in the *production of culture* literature in the sociology of culture. Classic statements of the production of culture approach are found in a 1976 anthology edited by Richard Peterson. Peterson suggested an alternative to established sociological approaches to the study of culture, which he framed as tending to be global in perspective and to conceptualize culture as either an autonomous system, a product of social structure, or a producer of social structure. Instead, Peterson advocated a focus (1976, p. 10)

on the processes by which elements of culture are fabricated in those milieux where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the center of activity. As used here, the term “production” is meant in its generic sense to refer to the processes of creation, manufacture, marketing, distribution, exhibiting, inculcation, evaluation, and consumption.

From the production of culture perspective, “elements of culture do not spring forth full blown but are made somewhere by someone” (Peterson 1979, p. 152), and generalizable processes of cultural production are to be found among specialists in quite varied social domains, including science, art, and religion. Empirical sociological investigation of the production of culture “is predicated on the hypothesis that the organization of these specialties will crucially condition the nature and development of the cultural elements involved” (Peterson 1979, p. 153). Peterson’s formulation reflects the roots of the production of culture orientation in literatures including organizational sociology and the sociology of professions (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976).

There are a small number of empirical studies in the production of culture literature that focus on style. The most significant is Diana Crane’s

book-length analysis of the development of styles in avant-garde art (Crane 1987). Rosenblum's (1978) earlier article focuses on style in photography, and clearly defines a basic model for the social production of style. I address both works below, and from them extract a general model of the social production of SM styles.

Before turning to Rosenblum and Crane, I first provide a brief introduction to four key concepts found in production of culture analyses of art, of which style is a more focused sub-topic.

1.31 Key concepts: Becker's *Art Worlds*

One of the most general and widely-cited works by a sociologist associated with the production of culture approach is Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982). Becker defines an *art world* as consisting of "all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art" (p. 34). The imagery of an art world is that of an interconnected network of artists, artistic conventions, supporting personnel, organizations, equipment, distribution systems, audiences with appropriate cultural training to interpret and appreciate art works, and broader social and political contexts within which cultural objects are created, classified as art, and brought to the public (p. 34-35). Consistent with the production of culture approach, Becker argues that artistic products (be they plastic arts, music, texts, dance, etc.) can be sociologically explained in terms of the social and material context in which they were created—the totality of which is referred to as an *art world*. Four general concepts elaborated in Becker's approach to the study of art will be applied here: networks, conventions, distribution systems, and the state.

Social networks are a key component of the explanatory framework developed here. Becker's art worlds are characterized by an informal network structure that Becker describes in terms of "cooperative links among participants" (p. 34-35). A "cooperative link" in the network exists whenever the artist depends on someone or something else in order to do their work (p. 25). The configuration of social networks involved in the production of art strongly influences the content of the work.

Conventions are practices that allow the art world to function, by providing standardized ways of doing things. Becker cites as an example the diatonic scale and standard notation used in Western music, which links composers, musicians and audience in a common framework. At the broadest level, conventions allows artists and their supporting networks to efficiently produce art works, and also allow audiences to interpret these works. Conventions also channel artistic production in particular directions, serving as a constraint in that they make non-standard ways of doing things more difficult and costly. Becker writes (p. 32):

Conventions place strong constraints on the artist. They are particularly constraining because they do not exist in isolation, but come in complexly interdependent systems so that one small change may require a variety of other changes. A system of conventions gets embodied in equipment, materials, training, available facilities and sites, systems of notation, and the like, all of which must be changed if any one component is.

Although Becker seemingly avoids the term "style" in favor of "convention," the concept is clearly located here in Becker's framework. Becker writes (p. 64):

Artists usually develop their own innovative materials over a period of time, creating a body of conventions peculiar to their own work. (Groups of artists frequently collaborate in the development of innovations so that schools and artistic sects develop characteristic conventions as well.)

Once established, conventions serve as collective patterns of action that can be learned, appropriated, and modified by others.

Distribution systems are a key factor in the production of any work aimed at a commercial market. As Becker succinctly frames the role of distribution systems (p. 93):

Artists, having made a work, need to distribute it, to find a mechanism which will give people with the taste to appreciate it access to it and simultaneously will repay the investment of time, money, and materials in the work so that more time, materials, and cooperative activity will be available with which to make more works.

Distribution systems are sociologically important because through them objects and ideas are promulgated to an audience. Distribution systems are also important because of their impact on the nature and content of artistic objects created. Becker argues that “art works always bear the marks of the system which distributes them, but vary in how that happens” (p. 94). He refrains from a deterministic framing of the causal impact of distribution systems, but his language is quite strong (p. 94-95):

Art works, then, come to be what the art world’s distribution system can handle because, for the most part, work that doesn’t fit doesn’t get distributed, when it is made at all, and most artists, wanting their work distributed, do not make what the system will not handle.

Becker points out that there are frequently multiple distribution systems available to artists, e.g., self-distribution of products is usually an option if institutionalized distribution systems cannot be used.

The final issue to highlight from Becker’s discussion is the legal environment, which Becker calls *art and the state*. Becker points out that, depending on the societal context, the state can play a crucial role in promoting or censoring a work or genre of art. In the case of SM it was attempts at censorship through police action, ultimately unsuccessful, that defined the direct role of the state. I discuss this below (see p. 121).

The concepts of networks, conventions, distribution systems, and the role of the state are very important in the analysis of SM style. They are also part of the core vocabulary of the current sociology of art literature.

1.32 Rosenblum and the production of style in photography

The theoretical area addressed by Rosenblum in “Style as Social Process” (1978) is the relationship between organizational contexts where cultural products are produced and the characteristics of the cultural products themselves. Rosenblum frames style in photography as “a function of the structural characteristics and constraints associated with typical situations in which photographs are made” (p. 422). Her empirical analysis focuses on three distinctive photographic styles: news, advertising, and fine arts. In each case, Rosenblum found that structural-organizational features of the production process helped to explain variations in the composition of the style.

Unlike earlier analyses that framed conventions as an independent variable, Rosenblum’s model for the production of style grants causal priority to social-organizational context (p. 423). Conventions are framed as “an intermediate variable, sandwiched between the organization of production and the characteristics of the final outcome” (p. 423). Style varies according to the organization of production, and reflects those economic, technical, political, and social forces that directly impact the practices of photographers. The model thus focuses attention on the origin of conventions characteristic of particular styles. In her focus on the local sites where photographs are produced, she employs a “micro” approach to the analysis of style that is similar in its orientation to ethnographic laboratory studies found in contemporary work in the sociology of science (e.g., Latour and Woolgar [1979] 1986).



Figure 18: Rosenblum's basic model of the production of style in photography

To briefly summarize Rosenblum's empirical findings, in the case of news photography a complex division of labor, standardized technologies, and editorial control in the production process yield very homogeneous images. Advertising photography, in contrast, is done in a client relationship with an advertising agency that hires the photographer to produce images called for in agency-produced layouts. The photographer is expected to apply technical skills to produce images demanded by the agency and advertiser. Photographs produced in this social-organizational context tend to be "technically innovative and not thematically innovative" (p. 431). Fine arts photography is driven by the aesthetic sensibilities of the photographer and exhibits wide thematic and technical variation. Fine arts photographers control virtually all aspects of production, and there is usually no division of labor in the production process. However, fine arts photographers do experience constraints in the form of institutional gatekeepers, who tend to prefer established traditions rather than striking innovations. Fine arts photographers oriented toward success in the marketplace must produce their work with the distribution system in which it will eventually be displayed, marketed and publicized in mind (p. 435).

I will extend this basic model defined by Rosenblum by augmenting it with variables defined in Crane (1987), as well as the empirical case (see Figure 19, p. 29 below).

1.33 Crane and the social organization of style

Style is the object of analysis in Crane's (1987) *The Transformation of the Avant-Garde — The New York Art World, 1940-1985*. In this book-length analysis of the development of seven avant-garde styles in mid-century New York City, Crane employs a structural explanatory framework that focuses on the social organization of the New York art world. Crane's analysis is much larger in scope than Rosenblum's, and extends attention to the social-institutional environment surrounding and supporting the production of style.

In Crane's analysis style is conceptualized in terms of both aesthetic content and, importantly, social networks associated with particular styles. She writes that "as a group phenomenon, a style represents a kind of collaborative endeavor on aesthetic problems, in the sense that *members* follow each other's work and exchange ideas..." (p. 19, my italics; see also p. 15). The composition of these networks varied according to style, but tended to be organized as an informal *social circle* (Kadushin 1976) linked to more formal organizations. These included organizations such as art galleries and co-ops, around which artists gathered and exchanged ideas (p. 30, 34).

Crane refers to artists being inside and "outside" of styles, which addresses their membership in these social networks (p. 20-21). Creative innovations tend to occur "inside" styles—i.e., within the boundaries of networks that define the distinct social-organizational context of a style (p. 25). In the context of these social groups, artists draw upon and modify established aesthetic traditions—such as modernism in the case of early avant-garde styles. Artists working "outside" styles are not members of these select groups, and tend to apply established conventions in their work. Crane cites the producers of tourist art as an example of artists working outside styles (p. 21). These

artists, who may be quite commercially successful, produce art for sale rather than, as in avant-garde styles, to address or redefine aesthetic values. We will see that this social conceptualization of style, with its social circle organization and inside/outside distinction in regard to creative innovations, is applicable to the development of SM styles.

Crane's analysis of variation in styles focuses on the composition of the networks surrounding styles. These include artists and their various constituencies, such as public and private patrons, art professionals such as curators and critics, and collectors and dealers (p. 35-36). Variations in the level of support and recognition provided by these various constituencies influence the success of particular styles.

The following diagram appropriates and extends Rosenblum's basic causal model for the development of style, and brings together key concepts introduced in my discussion of Becker, Rosenblum, and Crane above. As mentioned above, while I provide an historical overview of the nineteenth-early twentieth century "antecedent" style (chapter 1), as well as the European Fetish style (chapter 2), the analytical focus of this dissertation is on the two American styles (chapters 3-5). Inputs specified in this model are germane to the development of American Fetish and Gay Leather styles in the United States.

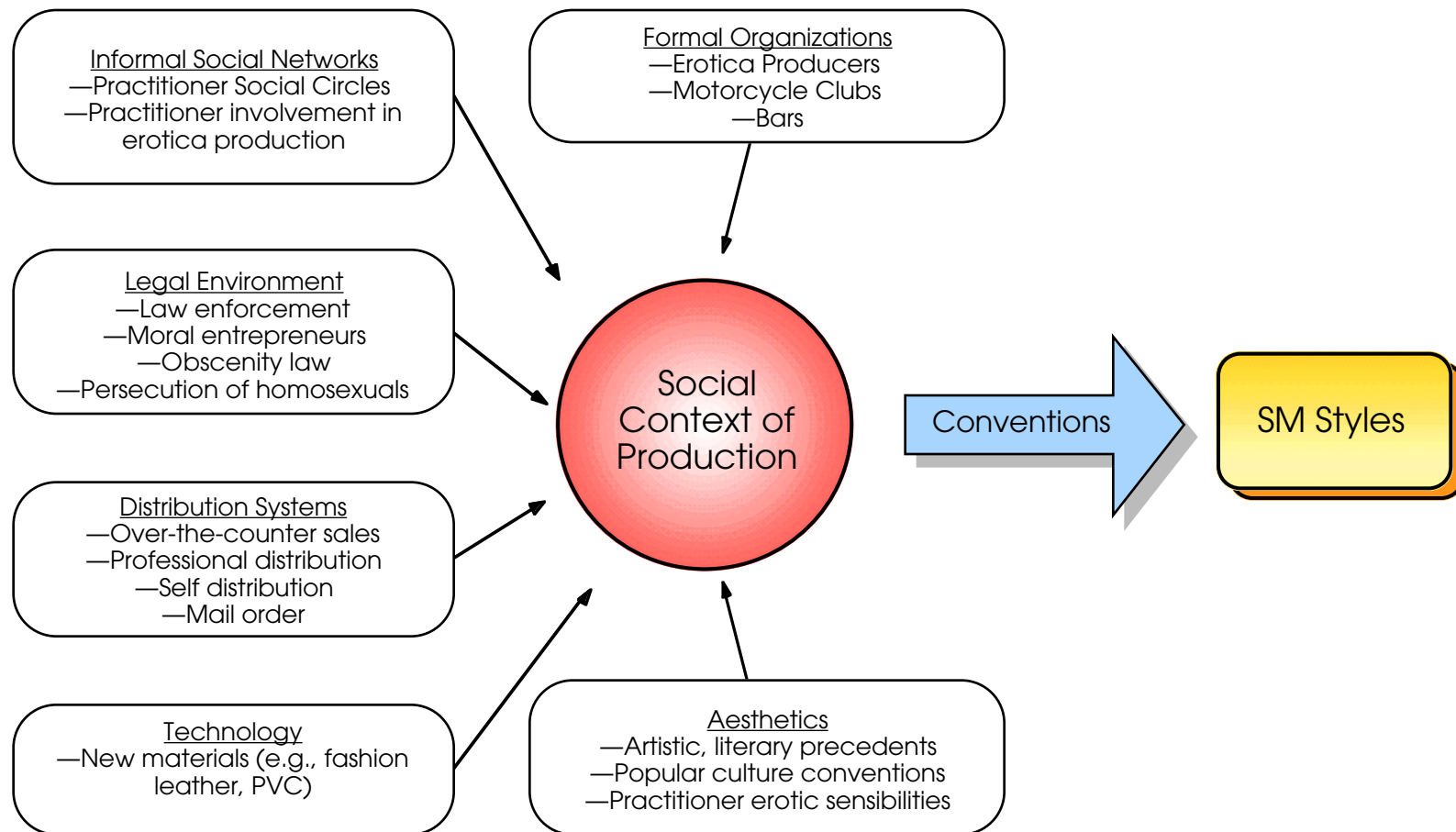


Figure 19: A basic model for the production of SM styles (see Conclusion, page 273 below, for an elaborated version of this model)

1.4 Methodology and Sources

1.41 Methods

My method of analysis follows the inductive approach advocated by Howard Becker (1982). This approach does not require that the analyst first determine the boundaries of the social world in question. Rather, the sociologist builds an understanding of the relevant network by examining (Becker 1982, p. 35)

groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art; having found them, we look for other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up as complete a picture as we can of the entire cooperating network that radiates out from the work in question. The world exists in cooperative activity of those people, not as a structure or organization, and we use words like those only as shorthand for the notion of networks of people cooperating.

In this analysis of SM style, my starting point was classical (pre-1960) SM and fetishistic erotica, primarily magazines and photography. My orienting question was: who produced this material? Identification of the producers, a task that itself consumed several months of detective work, led to a number of other issues surrounding the production of the material. My analysis thus keys-in on the *producers* of SM style, and follows their activities, trials, and cultural impact over a period of forty years. I have also investigated interactions between producers and U.S. government agencies, religious censorship organizations, underground networks of SM practitioners, and stylistic precedents.

The analysis frequently opened multiple levels in the chains of association, as when a legal assault on an erotica producer led me to investigate the archives of a federal agency, which in turn led to evidence of influence by religious morality organizations, which led to investigation of those

organizations and their interaction with the government and news media. Through this approach I seek to understand and ultimately explain the forces that *directly* impacted the development of SM style. Due to gaps in empirical data some of these relationships can be documented much more fully than others; in some important areas of the analysis very little data is currently available. I qualify my findings where appropriate, and limit my analysis by not delving into areas and issues that are not supported by some positive empirical evidence, however meager.

This inductive approach has kept me close to the empirical phenomenon under investigation, and has led to an explanation of the emergence of SM style that deemphasizes those people and social forces that are prominent in the current history of sexuality literature, such as the medical literature, and brings into play other social agents that have not previously been assigned important roles in historical studies of sexuality, such as the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

Data Analysis Tools: This analysis requires the ability to cross-reference events and cultural products across different social-organizational, temporal, and geographic domains. My research produced a huge amount of qualitative, historical data which in an unorganized form would be completely unmanageable. I constructed two database products to structure these data. The first is a simple database that provides an annotated index of materials I accumulated from various sources, allowing me to quickly access particular documents from the thousands of pages of material that I have filed in my personal research collection. The second is a more complex relational database that incorporates materials from the Kinsey Library and Archives and other sources. This database places “raw data” into historical context and allows

(searchable) connections to be made between three levels of data: erotica and other subcultural products, archival and other historical documents addressing producers and practitioners, and social-network and biographical information. Scholars will be able to consult the second database at the Kinsey Institute, where it will serve as a finding aid to the Institute's collection of SM and fetish materials.¹²

1.42 Sources

In many major works addressing the history of sexuality there is a section, either in the introduction or an appendix, where the author qualifies an analysis by noting that empirical data supporting the analysis are incomplete, non-random, selective, etc., and that the reader should always bear this limitation in mind (e.g., Greenberg 1988, p. 19-20; Waugh 1996, p. 12). It is now my moment to insert these necessary qualifications. I have an even greater burden than most. Unlike sexual categories such as homosexuality, which have reached a certain critical mass of descriptive historical studies that facilitate broader analytical work and theory building (Greenberg 1988, p. 5), historical SM subcultures are a topic almost untouched. So in *many* ways this is a pioneering work, which despite significant and inevitable gaps in data nevertheless attempts to draw together what empirical evidence is available into a theoretical account.

In the following profile of data sources I focus on the following categories: institutional sources, expert consultants, formal interviews, participant observation, and published literatures.

¹² Because incorporated archival data are inherently confidential, full access to these data is restricted to scholarly use in the context of a formal human subjects protection protocol. A separate finding aid with confidential information removed will also be available.

Institutional sources. The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (KIRSGR) collection and the Leather Archives and Museum (LA&M) in Chicago are the two key institutional sources I have consulted. I first discuss the Kinsey Institute. The Kinsey Institute holds an extensive collection of photography, books, magazines and correspondence that are relevant to the history of SM and fetishism. The empirical evidence I have gathered from the Kinsey Institute primarily addresses SM erotica producers in the American Fetish style, of which there were only a handful through the 1960's, and related networks of SM practitioners in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In some areas the information available is quite rich; in others fragmentary.

More specifically, archival materials held at the Kinsey Institute, primarily staff correspondence from the late 1940's to the late 1960's, have been a primary source of information in this project. These data have also served the important role of expanding and/or confirming information obtained from other sources. On more than one fortuitous occasion I have checked for references to a "key player" mentioned by a living consultant, and discovered a folder filled with correspondence between the Institute and that individual, in some cases dating from the late 1940's. I recently realized this was no accident: Alfred Kinsey, Paul Gebhard and Wardell Pomeroy had established contacts in the same, bounded networks that I was being led to in my research. These scholars—particularly Paul Gebhard, who was director of the Kinsey Institute from 1956 to 1982—were well aware of the significance of these individuals and cultivated several of the most important as long-term consultants. So I found myself explicitly retracing the steps of the master

fieldworkers of the Kinsey Institute, and finally putting data that the Institute accumulated over a period of decades to scholarly use.¹³

The networks represented in these records do seem to be the center of action in SM and fetish subcultures in the mid-century United States; they certainly cover the major producers of SM and fetish erotica through the 1960's. However, it must be noted that these data are incomplete, and it is impossible to know to what degree other "key players" or subcultural networks were not included in the sample contained in the Institute's files. However, given the sustained interest of the Institute and the long term nature of these contacts, as well as the documented fact that key members of subculture networks tended to at least know of each other, my sense is that this sample of documentary evidence provides an accurate outline of the SM-fetish subculture as it existed from the early 1930's through the mid-1960's. This is impossible to prove definitively, but a pattern of confirmation between archival data and data obtained from living consultants leads me to believe that the major contours of the network are captured in available data. In any event there is no doubt that, whatever their flaws and gaps, the Kinsey Institute materials I work with here constitute the "best data currently available" for historical producers in the American Fetish style. I intend to expand these data in post-dissertation work, and I sincerely hope that others will follow me to help fill gaps and correct errors.

¹³ It is to the great credit of the current administration of the Kinsey Institute that these data are now being made available on a restricted basis to scholars. It should be noted that these data are routine correspondence, not confidential sex histories (which are not accessible). The correspondence that has been most useful for my project is primarily that between Paul Gebhard and his various contacts in the field, which include individuals ranging from attorneys dealing with obscenity issues to erotica producers. Except for public figures already known in the role in which they are portrayed here (e.g., Chuck Renslow, John Coutts, Irving Klaw, Leonard Burtman), pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of these contacts.

The Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago is a non-profit community archive that is a key repository of materials in the Gay Leather style. The Leather Archives was founded in 1992 and formally opened on November 4, 1995. As a source of information on the Gay Leather style, the Leather Archives is very good, and holds an extensive collection of art, photography, oral histories, and post-1980 organizational documents including newsletters and correspondence. The Leather Archives also holds the extensive personal collection of Chuck Renslow and Dom Orejudos (a.k.a. Etienne and Stephen). Renslow and Orejudos opened the Gold Coast leather bar in Chicago in 1958; from 1954 they were the proprietors of Kris studio, an early American producer of SM and fetish erotica in the Gay Leather style. Because its roots are in the gay leather community, the collection is biased toward this subculture; there are few holdings addressing early heterosexual subcultures. However, within the gay leather category the Leather Archives and Museum is an important resource for scholars. The collection is also extremely accessible.

In the course of this research I visited other archives including the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington D.C. and NARA New York City, the U.S. Post Office Library in Washington D.C., and the Notre Dame University Archives in Notre Dame, Indiana. These specific institutional sources were selected based on practitioner-producer documents that indicated direct contact with agencies of social control. Records of such agencies are important for determining when, where, and how SM became an issue from the perspective of law enforcement and morality organizations. As George Chauncey's analysis demonstrates (1994, cf. p. 365-370), such records can provide important historical information about the targets of social control agencies—of course, the potential richness of these data is directly related to the intensity of social control efforts.

Expert Consultants: While SM as an *historical* topic has been virtually ignored in scholarly literatures, this is not to say that there are no experts. The experts that exist on the *early* twentieth century history of SM are located not in the academy, but among a handful of collectors and dealers of classical erotica who today form a small but international network. Classical SM and fetish erotica is collected today by an affluent and educated clientele; in this highly specialized field, classical art, photo sets or books from early twentieth century producers can sell for thousands of dollars each (see Vasta 1997). Because it is their business, dealers in such material, such as J.B. Rund and Joseph Vasta in New York City, Alexandre Dupouy in Paris, and Yogi Klein in Chicago, of necessity become bibliophiles and historians of the genre. Their expertise is derived from contact with others in the dealer-collector network, review of literatures related to the history of pornography and publishing, and hands-on review of thousands of items in the course of their work. Some of my consultants have over thirty years of professional experience working with this material. If one wants to know the name and significance of the publisher of a French fetish novel series from the 1920's, or know the names of living photographers for American cheesecake magazines in the 1940's, these men are the living sources of information. (I have not encountered any women working in the field.) In terms of initially getting this project off the ground, and later developing a more nuanced analysis than would have been possible drawing exclusively from published sources, formal interviews and frequent communication with consultants among this dealer-collector group have been invaluable. In addition, members of this group generously gave me access to historical documents and images used in this dissertation.

From this group there are a few publications, and they are must-read sources for the scholar interested in the European Fetish and American Fetish styles. These include Alexandre Dupouy's *Yva Richard: L'âge d'or du fétichisme* (1994), a remarkable and singular history of a twentieth century (1913-1943) pioneer in fetish clothing and photography. Dupouy is currently employing his preeminent collection of Yva Richard and classical French erotica in a variety of publishing projects (e.g., *Discipline* 1993), and promises a future history of a second major French producer, Diana Slip. J.B. Rund's historical introductions to his various publications are also quite valuable (e.g., Rund 1974, 1975, 1976). In addition to his extensive bibliographic knowledge of classical erotica, Rund is a careful folklorist of SM and fetishism whose work reflects a fastidious attention to detail and concern about historical accuracy. He is the world authority on John Coutts, a significant early producer in the American Fetish style that I address beginning in chapter three (p. 86 below)

Additional expert consultants include Herbert Monte-Levy, who was for many years legal counsel for Leonard Burtman, a major mid-century New York SM-fetish erotica producer. Mr. Levy has been involved for many years with first amendment issues and from 1949 to 1956 was staff counsel for the ACLU. Other consultants include publishers of SM erotica, SM community organizers, owners of SM-fetish related businesses, producers of fetishistic clothing and paraphernalia, and professional researchers and writers (both academic and non-academic) who have addressed the history of SM.

Formal Interviews: I conducted formal, recorded interviews with several expert consultants. The content of these interviews varied depending on the position and role of the consultant. Not all interviews are used in the dissertation; cited interviews are listed in the references section (see p. 299).

Interviews were conducted in accordance with the human subjects protocol approved for my project by the (Indiana University) Bloomington Campus Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. All cited interviews were transcribed.

Participant observation: During this research I participated in SM organizational activities in two capacities. I worked as a volunteer at the Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago.¹⁴ I also attended four national level SM conferences, located in New York City, Chicago, and Portland, OR. At the latter conference in Portland, Living in Leather XI, I presented a paper, “Origins of the Modern SM/Fetish Style,” that was an expanded version of a paper I presented the following month at the national meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality. My (non-practitioner) participant observation at these sites has been invaluable in two areas. First, it increased my knowledge of SM subcultures through extended contact with knowledgeable members of the SM community. These contacts provided both insight and feedback on my work. Second, by volunteering my time and helping with organizational projects I gained access to resources that have been invaluable in my research. These range from personal contacts and referrals, to historical data not available in archival sources.

¹⁴ In early 1996 I volunteered to serve as the Research Coordinator of the Leather Archives and Museum. In this capacity I provided advice to the Leather Archives on issues such as oral history protocols and construction of an electronic catalog of their library holdings. The Board of Directors and staff of the Leather Archives and Museum include many of the most prominent members of the leather community today—among them are noted authors, organizational leaders, and scholars. Through my association with this elite group within the community, some of whom undertook to educate me about the SM subculture, I learned a great deal about the organization and norms of the current leather community.

Published Literatures: Most academic writings on SM or fetishism are written from a clinical or theoretical point of view, and thus are largely useless as a source of historical information on practitioner subcultures. The sociological-anthropological literature on SM tends to focus on the late twentieth century and has little historical information on early practitioner subcultures.¹⁵ There are only a handful of scholarly works that engage producers and early practitioner subcultures, prominently the pioneering work of David Kunzle (1982), who maintained extensive contacts in the world of corsetry and related fetishism. Other examples include Gibson (1978), Rubin (1994), and Waugh (1996).

¹⁵ For example, Schiller's (1986) dissertation briefly discusses early gay SM subcultures (e.g., p. 61-65), but his focus is on practices and the social organization of post-1972 San Francisco gay SM. Gregersen's (1969) early talk is interesting but very brief. There are two "historical" articles on SM contained in the anthologies edited by T. Weinberg and Kamel that are little more than grab-bags of historical and popular culture "SM" anecdotes (Falk and T. Weinberg 1983; T. Weinberg and Magill 1995). The value of these articles is minuscule. With the exception of Gayle Rubin's work, the best published sources on early gay SM are found in the lay literature, to which I refer in the course of the historical analysis. Unfortunately, there are no published sources detailing early twentieth century heterosexual SM groups in the United States.

Chapter Two: The Genesis of the European Fetish Style

2.1 Introduction

European Fetish was the first modern SM style, and the direct antecedent of the American Fetish style. In this chapter I provide an historical overview of the European Fetish style. This discussion places the American styles in historical context by addressing precedents and contemporary producers that impacted the development of American SM/fetish social networks and erotica production. I focus on developments in Europe and Australia from the late nineteenth century to World War II. The chapter is structured into three sections, focusing on three geographic areas outside the United States: Britain-Australia (§ 2.2); France (§ 2.3), and Germany (§ 2.4).

In these three geographic regions I am mainly concerned with erotica producers who established stylistic or organizational precedents that *directly* influenced producers of American SM styles. Direct linkages are indicated through references contained in correspondence and other documents of producers/practitioners in the United States, or through obvious appropriation of European stylistic conventions.

As the reader will note, the configuration of relevant media in each region varies. For example, in Britain magazines were the primary medium of the European Fetish style, which incorporated the bizarre aesthetic combined with hard media fetishism. English-language books, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Kidrodstock 1909, Groves 1931), during this early period tended to focus on modal nineteenth century practices such as flagellation—the so-called “English vice” (see Mendes 1993). This was not the case in France, which as I describe below produced a number of noteworthy novels in the

modern style, including the English-language novels cited above. “Bizarre” photographs were a specialty of the French and Germans. In Germany virtually nothing is known about producers in the modern style outside of the groups identified here.

The brief and selective history I present here could be considerably expanded by following threads of developments in related areas such as erotica publishing, sexual subcultures, prostitution, etc., back through the early nineteenth and eighteenth centuries. Such an exhaustive historical analysis is clearly beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses on the twentieth-century United States.

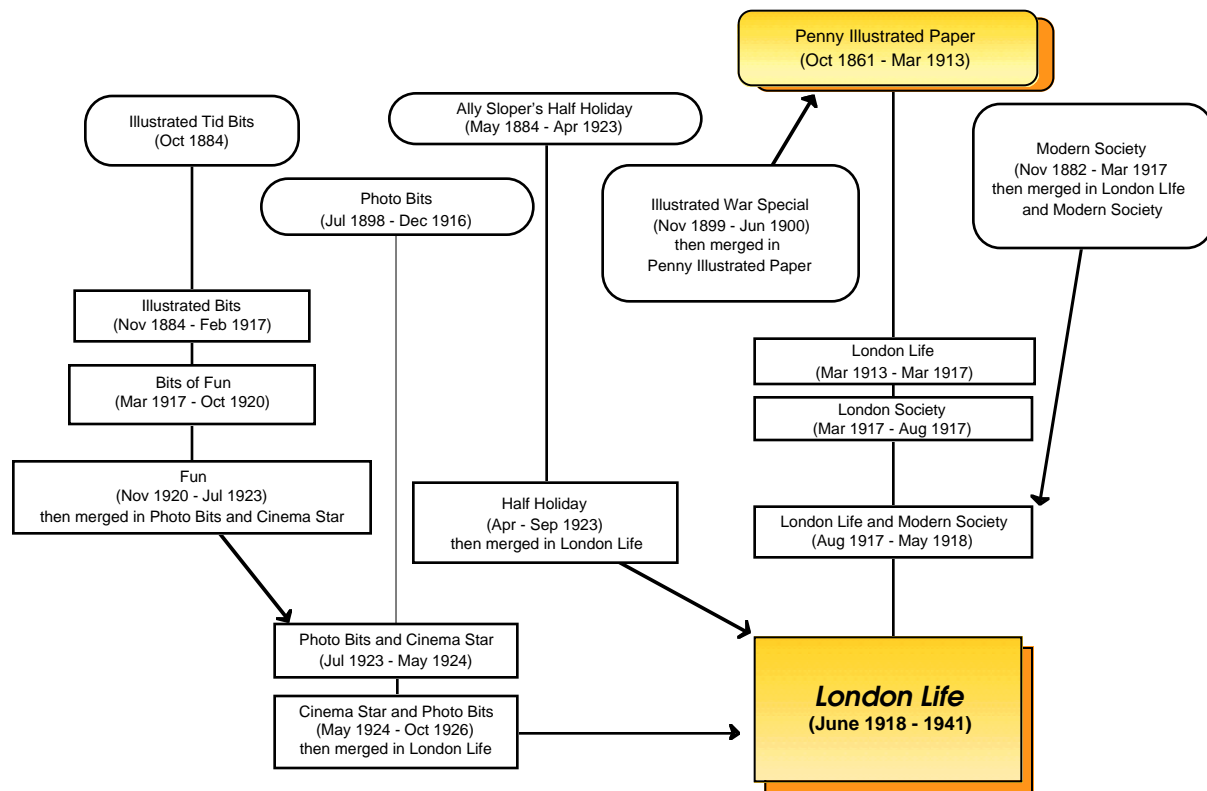


Figure 20: Genealogy of *London Life* magazine

2.2 Britain and Australia

Of extreme importance in the history of modern SM and fetishism are a number of internationally distributed British fetishist publications whose lineage began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued to the second World War. During the 1930's, the decade when the American Fetish style commenced, the key fetishist magazine in the world was *London Life*.¹⁶ *London Life* was a singular phenomenon that is unparalleled to this day in the scope of its content and international distribution. In the early twentieth-century *London Life* and similar magazines were distributed in the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, Ceylon, and France.¹⁷ *London Life* was available literally around the globe, including outlets such as “most railway bookstalls in India” (Kunzle 1982, p. 260), and many businesses frequented by fetishists, such as shoe stores, in locations ranging from Sydney, Australia to New York City. It was a worldwide advertising venue for craftpersons who created fetishistic clothing as well as sellers of erotic books

¹⁶ The genealogy diagrammed above is that presented in Stewart et al., *British Union-Catalogue of Periodicals* (1957, p. 89, 91, 236, 446, 521, 545). Kunzle offers a divergent and less detailed genealogy (1982, p. 267-268, n. 3) that cannot be reconciled with Stewart et al.. A key difference is that Kunzle states that *Photo Bits* merged with *Bits of Fun* in March 1917 (this would fill an apparent gap in the *British Union-Catalogue* account). I diagram the more complete account in Stewart et al. here.

¹⁷ *Photo Bits*, Nov. 25, 1911 publisher statement. Stylistic similarities and other evidence suggests that *London Life* and *Photo Bits* were products of the same publisher. Among other indications, the publisher of both was located on Fleet Street in London and was served by the same overseas agents.



Figure 21: *London Life* cover, March 4, 1933 (PC)

and photography. These advertisers included, by 1933, producers in the United States. Most important, the magazine is highlighted in contemporary correspondence and documents of early producers in the American Fetish style, who read, advertised in, and contributed to *London Life*. As I elaborate in the next chapter, *London Life* served as a direct model for producers of SM/fetish magazines in the American Fetish style in the 1940's.

The genealogy of *London Life* is complex, commencing in 1861 with a magazine called the *Penny Illustrated Paper*. *London Life* in the late 1920's was the result of a series of mergers and transformations of at least fifteen antecedent publications over a period of sixty-five years (see Figure 20, p. 41 above). The distinguishing feature of many of these publications was the extensive discussion of an eclectic mix of erotic, and more specifically fetishistic, topics that addressed "kinks" or the "bizarre." In the nineteenth century these prominently included topics such as fetishistic corsetry, or "tight-lacing," and corporal punishment/flagellation.¹⁸ In the early twentieth century the scope of these discussions included a

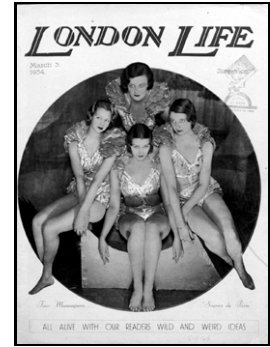


Figure 22: *London Life* cover, March 3, 1934. Image reprinted courtesy of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, hereafter abbreviated on image captions as KIRSGR.

¹⁸ A number of similar magazines were contemporaries of *London Life*'s antecedents but not in *London Life*'s direct line of development. A prominent example is the mid-nineteenth century *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* (EDM). The EDM contained extensive correspondence and discussion of topics such as tight-lacing and corporal punishment; a particularly notorious (and very likely fictitious) run of correspondence addressing extreme forms of tight-lacing appeared in the EDM between 1867 and 1874 (cf. Steele 1996, p. 58-59, 70-71).

wide variety of “bizarre” topics that continued to be elaborated in *London Life* through the 1930’s. In addition to *London Life* itself, antecedents of *London Life* that are cited as containing fetishistic or “lurid” material include *Illustrated Bits*, *Fun*, *Photo Bits*, *Ally Sloper’s Half-Holiday*, and *Modern Society*.¹⁹

In the United States today institutional and private collections of *London Life* are rare, and collections of antecedent magazines rarer still.²⁰ This complicates analysis of these important popular culture products. I was able to draw upon two sources for samples of these publications: the dealer-collector network mentioned above, and the Kinsey Library.²¹ These allow an informative look at an early twentieth-century forerunner to *London Life*, and provide a very good sample of *London Life* itself. In the section below I discuss *Photo Bits*, focusing on its role as an antecedent to *London Life*—specifically, continuities and discontinuities in content. In the following section I focus on *London Life*.

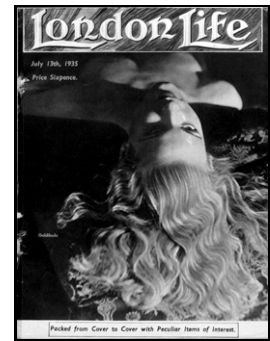


Figure 23: *London Life* cover, July 13, 1935 (KIRSGR)

¹⁹ See Kunzle 1982, p. 267-268; Louise Lawrence autobiography, p. 73-74 (Louise Lawrence Collection, KIRSGR).

²⁰ Consultants and various correspondence (cf. Kunzle correspondence, Kinsey Archives) indicate that the British Museum has the best collection of these materials today. Titus (1965) listed only two libraries in the United States with holdings of *London Life*.

²¹ For future scholars: the KIRSGR library holds 94 issues of *Photo Bits*, in date range of June 26, 1909 to December 30, 1911. The Institute also holds over 200 issues of *London Life*, in the range of February 5, 1927 to August 10, 1940, including a bound copy of all 1932 issues. These are listed in Appendix One below.

2.21 *Photo Bits*

Photo Bits was published from 1898 to 1916 and was part of a line of publications that merged in *London Life* in 1926. The “look” of *Photo Bits* is distinctly Victorian: its pages are filled with images of full-figured women in hour-glass shaped long dresses and men clad in top hats, and with the exception of leather footwear and gloves its erotic representations are in the soft media style characteristic of the nineteenth century. However, a review of *Photo Bits* provides much evidence that the magazine was a popular culture product located in the transitional period between the antecedent (19th century) and modern eras of SM and fetishism.

Structurally, many *Photo Bits* conventions are found later in *London Life*. These include regular features such as a reader correspondence section, serialized fiction, cartoons, artwork, photographs (including nudes), and international advertisements. There were also columns written by regular columnists attuned to the “bizarre” world—in 1909-1911 these were “The Amorist” and “Cosmopolite.” These columnists maintained an on-going dialogue with their readers about a variety of kinky topics.

In content, the repertoire of “kinks” addressed in *Photo Bits*, c. 1910, can be framed as a core subset of the expanded and considerably elaborated set of activities discussed in *London Life* twenty-five years later. The content of the magazine was not exclusively erotic (as in *London Life*), but texts, photographs,

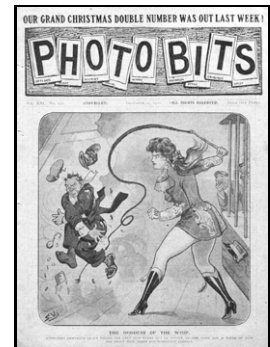


Figure 24: *Photo Bits* cover, “The Goddess of the Whip,” Dec. 24, 1910 (KIRSGR)

and drawings of a variety of fetishistic and SM images filled the pages of *Photo Bits*. Recurring topics in *Photo Bits* included tight-lacing and high-heeled shoe fetishism; the “SM” topics of flagellation and female domination; and transvestism and the related “SM” topic of petticoat discipline, where men (or boys) are forced by women to wear female clothing.²² More unusual topics discussed included specialized fetishes such as monopede fetishism (“one legged girls”) and satin fetishism. A particular vocabulary found through the mid-twentieth century SM/fetish world found expression in *Photo Bits*. These included terms such as: bizarre, kinks, slaves of fashion, fancy dress (i.e. fetishistic costume), “cults” referencing specialized groups of fetishists, such as the cult of the high heel, corset, whipping, and glove.²³

Many of these motifs, such as flagellation and tight-lacing, were modal categories of nineteenth-century British erotica (Gibson 1978; Mendes 1993; Steele 1996). However, one finds in *Photo Bits* a definite movement toward a distinctively twentieth-century disposition: the purposeful, creative



Figure 25: "The Belle with the Birch," *Photo Bits*, March 25, 1911 (PC)

²² A “female impersonator” serialized story was “Amber the Actor” by Derk Fortescue, which began on Nov. 26, 1910; see also “If men dressed like women” in the same issue. Female domination was the key topic in many *Photo Bits* articles, including: “The Cultivation of the Cub,” Aug. 6, 1910, Jan. 28, 1911; “Women Whipping Women,” June 10, 1910; “Petticoat Government,” June 3, 1911; “The Ill-Used Husband,” Jan. 28-Mar. 4, 1911; “Should Ladies Teach Boys,” Dec. 31, 1910; “The Muscular Girl,” article series on July 23, 1910, Oct. 15, 1910, Jan. 14, 1911. Other topics are cited in footnotes below.

²³ Captions and articles include: “cult of the corset,” April 23, 1910; “cult of whipping,” Jan. 7, 1911; “cult of the high heel,” March 18, 1911, April 1, 1911, Dec. 23, 1911; “cult of the glove,” Dec. 30, 1911; “A slave of fashion,” April 15, 1911; “The One-Legged Girl,” March 4, 1911.

exploration and elaboration of unusual or “bizarre” forms of sexuality. An explicit example of this emerging disposition was provided on July 30, 1910 when *Cosmopolite*, one of *Photo Bits*’ professional commentators on erotic trends, called upon his readers to write him with accounts of “the most drastic discipline.” Several months later his disappointing responses prompted *Cosmopolite* to chastise his readers for their lack of imagination; specifically, a tendency to adhere to the “orthodox” and “weary” motif of the birch and flagellation. He wrote (*Photo Bits*, December 3, 1910, italics in original):²⁴

When I first took up this matter, my sole idea was to seek for *bizarre* forms of discipline as practised by those who had studied the subject carefully for change and variety. I knew perfectly well that I should hear what I did — of the orthodox, of boys and girls being taken across the knees of parents and teachers in the old-fashioned style, or being placed over the edges of baths and balustrade rails, or tied to tables and wardrobes, etc., with their attire as conventionally demanded or so arranged that it should be distinctly otherwise, whilst straps, canes, birches, flat-irons, the backs of hair brushes and what-not fulfilled their appointed office.

Now, all this is extremely disappointing and I refuse *in toto* to write in such a way that I shall repeat myself *ad infinitum*. Lord! what is there is describing an unruly “flapper” being chastised in the manner with which everybody is familiar — howling and wriggling to the accompaniment of so many sounds which strike upon one’s ear like the sharp, drawn back slapping of a cricket bat blade on a surface of water?

... The cult of birching, its significance from cause to effect, will endure as long as this weary old orange of ours chooses to revolve through space; but it’s hardly a subject that affords unlimited scope, the ringing of changes one after another, as some of your seem to image. “The History of the Rod,” “The Birch in the Boudoir,” etc., have knocked the matter inside out; and careful analysis gives the one result all the time. There’s little more to be said.



WHIT MONDAY FRIVOLITY AT THE FANCY FAIR.
IT'S DISCREETLY APPROPRIATELY ACCORDING WHOM A WHIP CAN HAVE A CHANCE TO BEAT
THE WHIP OUT FOR THAT CRACK, AND IT'S EQUALLY DISCREETLY APPROPRIATELY
ATTENDING WHAT THE WHIP WILL COME UP TO BEATEN FOR THE CRACK. BE
THE WHIP, WHAT FINE THE WHIP BEING AND "WHIPPING" IS THE WHIP.

Figure 26: "Whit Monday Frivolity at the Fancy Fair," *Photo Bits*, May 21, 1910 (PC)

²⁴ See also “The Pleasure of Pain,” April 1, 1911. On the topic of consensual punishment “accomplished by a suggestion of culture and refinement,” see “The Peculiarities of Punishment,” Feb. 4, 1911.

Despite his limited success in eliciting tales of “bizarre” practices in 1910, the movement of interest to *Cosmopolite* was well underway. By 1935 the pages of *London Life* would move far beyond Victorian flagellation and would be replete with the “bizarre,” and it would be zealous contributors who would complain about the conservatism of the editorial staff of the magazine.

In these days of militant Suffragettes and other equally strenuous types of claimant and warlike ladies, the Muscular Girl bulks largely in the public eye, by reason of her methods, her size, and the indefinable *something* that breeds respect.

Figure 27: Emerging
bizarre: "The New
Figure Training,"
Photo Bits, June 4,
1910 (PC)

She's a creation of the latter part of the nineteenth century, and she's come to stay—incidentally, probably to marry a man vastly her inferior in physical strength, and gratify her pride and sense of humour by “taming” him!

Her “methods” included learning ju-jitsu (a martial arts reference that would shift in context but recur repeatedly in the European and American Fetish styles through the 1950's) and weight lifting in the gymnasium. Cosmopolite's July 23, 1910 article “The Muscular Girl” was replete with descriptions of “strong” women dominating and humiliating their “little runt of a chap” husbands. This particular icon of the (literally) big woman and small husband, the dominatrix of brute force, would be superseded by more sophisticated framings.²⁵

In other areas *Photo Bits* differed significantly from *London Life*. Cosmopolite, ever at the cutting edge, in a number of articles attempted to apply the new medical framings of topics such as fetishism—in one article he explicitly referenced Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (*Photo Bits* Jan 14, 1911).²⁶ The effort was vigorously rebuffed by readers; for example, “Pepita” wrote (*Photo Bits*, Nov. 25, 1911; italics in original):

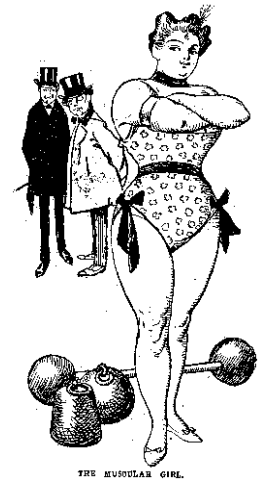


Figure 28 : "The Muscular Girl," *Photo Bits*, Dec. 3, 1910 (PC)

²⁵ For example, see *London Life* letter “The fine art of jilting,” Nov. 2, 1935, which emphasizes psychological domination.

²⁶ Cosmopolite articles in which medical terminology is used include “The Fascination of the Fetish,” May 13, 1911; “The Tattooing Mania,” June 3, 1911, which addressed tattooing and scarification (“modern primitives” topics today); “The One-Legged Girl,” Nov. 5, 1910.

Do get Cosmopolite to make up his mind once and for all whether he is cut out for a journalist or a doctor! I like a good many more in this bad old world try to find *le beau dans l'horrible*; he is always unearthing *l'horrible dans le beau*! I want to ask him these simple questions: is a woman, who loves every fetish that pleases her friends, herself a fetishist; and, if so, how does he pigeon-hole her fetishism? And, if he finally succeeds in labelling her with some barbarous name, has he done anything that will interest anybody?

Cosmopolite's defense is to note that he probably would have been a doctor had he not become a journalist, and to deemphasize the relevance of the new medical framework. He replied (ibid.):

When I was younger, Pepita, we called our pleasure, pleasure. Now, we are told it is the degenerate ebullition of super-cerebral excitement; but the fine words don't add to or detract one little bit from the exquisite delight we both find in it.

In any case, it was evidently clear enough to Cosmopolite and his successors that the "barbarous" medical framing of "fetishistic" activities was *not* of interest to the audience of magazines such as *Photo Bits* and *London Life*. Kunzle notes that one finds "virtually no reference" to medical terminology, including the term "fetishism," in *London Life* (Kunzle 1982, p. 257). Instead, a subcultural, practitioner vocabulary of "kinks" and the "bizarre" was used.

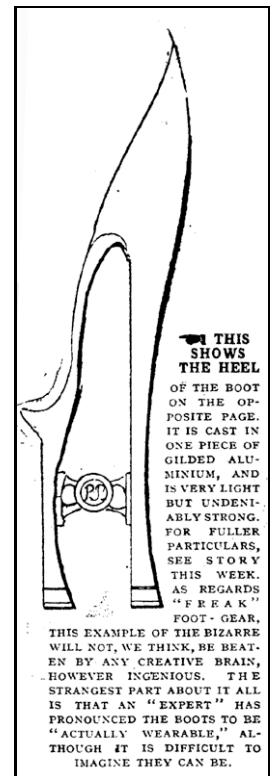


Figure 29: *Photo Bits* "bizarre," May 14, 1910 (PC)



Figure 30: *London Life*, November 12, 1927 (KIRSGR)

2.22 *London Life*

London Life is modern in appearance, a much larger and more eclectic magazine than *Photo Bits*. The *London Life* of the 1930's was first published on June 1, 1918,²⁷ although Kunzle notes that the "fetishist penetration" did not begin until 1923 (Kunzle 1982, p. 260). The 1930's were the heyday of *London Life*, and the magazine expanded in size and scope to include a number of topics and representations seldom (or not) found in antecedents. *London Life*'s fetishistic content continued until the publication's London office was bombed by the German Luftwaffe in 1941, when "10,000 pounds worth of machinery—and all the files—were destroyed" (Kunzle 1982, p. 260).

²⁷ The title "London Life" was used by other publications. In the late nineteenth-century there were two British magazines entitled *London Life* that are not in the line of development discussed here. The first ran in sixteen issues from 24 May to 6 September 1879; a second was a single issue issued on 18 September 1898 (Stewart et al. 1957, p. 91). A digest-sized magazine entitled *London Life* was also published after World War II.

To understand what Kunzle calls the “*London Life* formula,” it is important to note that much of the content of *London Life* was not exclusively devoted to “kinks.” Each issue of the magazine allotted a significant portion of its space to fashion, film, theater, movie stars, gossip, sports, and current events in popular culture. Regular features such as “Fashions, Fads and Fancies” kept the readership up to date on mainstream fashion trends, “The Talk of the Town” contained news bits and gossip. Many issues had movie stars, such as Bing Crosby and Cary Grant, or theater performers on the cover. Most images found in the magazine during the 1930’s were sexy but mainstream sepia-tone photographs of performers; other common visual topics included elaborate burlesque costumes and artistic nudes. With its “normal” content the magazine could stand on its own with a non-bizarre readership.

But for the connoisseur of kinks, *London Life* was without doubt the most accessible and bountiful feast on the planet. Every topic mentioned above was addressed in *London Life*, and *Photo Bits* mainstays such as shoe/boot fetishism and female domination were present in virtually every issue. For over a decade, these topics were endlessly elaborated. A general trend in content, however, is a shift in emphasis away from traditional nineteenth-century practices, such as flagellation and tight-lacing, and toward more specialized kinks. Topics that became prominent in the late 1920’s and 1930’s included rubber fetishism, wrestling girls, human ponies, and body piercings. There was even an occasional homoerotic image in the normally



Figure 31: Hard media. From *London Life* "Future Fashions Revue," April 1935 (KIRSGR)

narrowly heterosexual orientation of the magazine (e.g., see *London Life*, Oct. 31, 1936, p. 56-57). Images of women wearing highly fetishistic leather outfits, often accompanied with SM props, marked the shift to hard media representations of SM and fetishism that became common by the mid-1930's. This style of hard media representation was seldom found in *Photo Bits*.

Fiction and non-fiction articles addressed bizarre topics, but the key medium within the magazine for the discussion of kinks was the correspondence section. Much of the fetishistic content of the magazine was generated by the readership itself, who would address each other in the correspondence columns, using names such as: N.Y.C., Macintoshed Mollie, Dominating Catherine, Rubber Lined, Admirer of Amazons, Wrestling Gladys, and Marquis of the Old Regime.²⁸

As noted above, *London Life* provided a key advertising venue for producers who served an international market. Regular advertisers in the 1930's included English craft shops such as Mary Perry, who produced "fancy dress" and, later, rubberized fetish costumes; Madame Lorette, maker of corsets for men and women, "tiny waists our specialty"; L.L. Charles and Co., seller of fetish photographs and erotic books: "Very - chic ... Just the kind you want"; Hyman, maker of high-heeled shoes "up to 7 1/2 inches"; The Hygienic Stores, LTD.,



Figure 32: Hard media. *London Life*, from Feb. 23, 1935 "Fashion Supplement" (KIRSGR)

²⁸ Unlike the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, there is no doubt that much of this correspondence was authentic: regular correspondents mailed in photos and artwork that accompanied their letters. In addition, I have been able to verify the identities of several correspondents.

maker of “surgical rubber goods”; Regent Shoe Stores, producers of boots and high-heeled shoes “any height up to 8 in.” Producers in Sydney, Australia included MacNaught and Achilles, both producers of fetish footwear. In addition to ads,



Figure 33: "Achilles" ad, *London Life*, June 1, 1935 (KIRSGR)

these producers provided photographs of their products that were reprinted in the magazine, often in the correspondence section. Producers also contributed letters addressing their products, such as Mary Perry’s “The Hand-Made versus the Machine-Made gown.”

The business and practitioner aspects of *London Life* worked together in the development of international SM and fetish social networks. Available evidence indicates that practitioners in the “bizarre” world of SM and fetishism in the late 1920’s and 1930’s tended to be a relatively affluent and far-flung crowd. Directly, it was *London Life* that provided the international medium that brought many of these individuals into contact with businesses that produced paraphernalia necessary for their kinks. Indirectly, these contacts also contributed to the development of SM practitioner networks. The following is a model for some of the contacts: a reader interested in a particular SM or fetish related item, e.g., high-heeled shoes or SM photographs, would write to a merchant of such material who advertised in *London Life*. Such letters would often include details of the individual’s interests and experiences; if ordering a particular fetish item a detailed description of the practitioner’s object of interest was implicit. Letters or orders

would result in the writer being placed on a mailing list, and occasionally extended correspondence. Although it was the editorial policy of *London Life* not to reveal the addresses of correspondents,²⁹ this restriction was not followed by advertisers in *London Life*. These businesses did provide referrals that put interested practitioners into contact with each other. Thus, new members would enter the network.

It was through such a referral that John Coutts, later publisher of *Bizarre* magazine and a key figure in mid-century SM and fetishism in the United States, was put into contact with members of the American network in Chicago and New York City. At the time of his first contact with the American network in the late 1930's, Coutts lived in Sydney, Australia.³⁰

The importance of *London Life* in the history of fetishistic erotica has been noted in the literature (Kunzle 1982; Steele 1996). However, the key role of *London Life* as a medium supporting international commerce in fetishistic equipment and products, and as a facilitator of international social networks of SM and fetish practitioners, has not been highlighted. Beyond its contributions to the European Fetish style, *London Life* made important contributions to the development of a commercial and social infrastructure for heterosexual SM and fetishistic style. As we shall see, its direct influence would be apparent in the American Fetish style through the 1960's.

²⁹ This policy was stated in many issues; e.g., "The editor regrets that it is impossible to place readers in communication, either by exchange of address or otherwise," (*London Life*, July 27, 1935, p. 57).

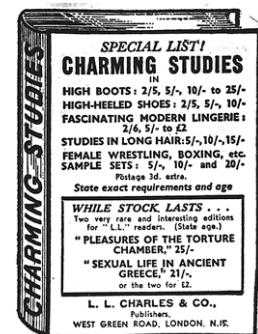


Figure 34: L.L. Charles publishers, *London Life*, August 10, 1940 (PC)



Figure 35: "Something New!" Mary Perry ad, *London Life*, July 27, 1935 (PC)

2.3 France

In this section I focus on four major French producers of SM and fetishistic material during the 1930's, all of which contributed to the development of the European Fetish style. Two were producers/resellers of fetishistic costume, photography, and paraphernalia: Yva Richard and Diana Slip.

³⁰ This contact is discussed in detail below; see p. 86.

These firms created original material and resold the work of others. The second were two French publishers that specialized in sadomasochistic and fetishistic novels: Select Bibliothèque and Librairie Générale. Novels published by these firms in the late 1920's and 1930's often had extremely strong "bizarre" content combined with hard media fetishistic representations. These French producers are identified in correspondence and other documents of early United States producers in the American Fetish style. Interview data (Rund 1996; Vasta-Rund 1997) and Dupouy (1994) are the primary sources of information concerning these French producers.

2.31 Yva Richard

"Yva Richard" was one of the most prominent producers of SM and fetishistic paraphernalia during the 1930's. The firm was founded in 1913 by a husband and wife team of stylists, Nativa and Richard L., and operated continuously to 1943 (Dupouy 1994, p. 123). In 1917, when Yva Richard first advertised their products, the firm specialized in couture, particularly "high class" lingerie. In an early ad they describe their products as "elegant, Parisian chic, exquisitely original" (ibid., p. 124).

Around 1923 Yva Richard's product line expanded to include photographs produced by the firm. The photographs were used in various

LINGERIE DE LUXE



Fleur de Pêché. — Chemise voile de soie et dentelle noire..... France 115 fr. Etranger 19/- \$ 5
(Envoi franco France et Colonies)

Grand choix de chemises, depuis..... France 30 fr. Etranger..... 7/- \$ 2

Dépliant illustré et prix-courant de trousseau. France 5 fr. Etranger..... 5 fr. 1/-

Plaquette de 17 croquis inédits..... France 10 fr. Etranger..... 3/- \$ 1

ALBUM de GRAND LUXE. — Les plus jolis modèles de lingerie. — Aquarelles et Photographies d'après nature..... France 5 fr. Etranger 1/- \$ 2

FRIVOLITÉS PARISIENNES. — Revue trimestrielle des plus jolies parures féminines. — Les plus élégants dessous Parisiens. — Créations Yva RICHARD. Photographies en couleurs, Aquarelles. — L'abonnement..... France 100 fr. Etranger 20/- \$ 5

SOIRS MYSTÉRIEUX. — Travestis osés et modern style. — Hors texte peints à la main. 45 modèles inédits. *Le Confetti, La marchande de Bas Longs, l'Éventail indiscret*, etc. France 20 fr. Etranger 5/- \$ 1

Envoi franco de ces trois publications très différentes sous pli recommandé. France 75 fr. Etranger 20/- \$ 5

Send B. P. O. banknotes chèques
NOT MONEY ORDERS

Yva RICHARD

COUTURE — LINGERIE — TRAVESTIS

8, Rue du Marché-St-Honoré. — PARIS

Figure 36: Yva Richard ad, *La Vie Parisienne*, 1926 (PC)

advertisements and ephemera³¹ issued by the firm, but also sold separately in the form of albums and photo sets. The model in many Yva Richard photographs was Nativia herself—with the photographs presumably taken by Richard—clad in costume ranging from lingerie to bizarre fetish outfits in metal and leather. Today the voluptuous Nativia is one of the most recognizable figures of early twentieth-century fetishistic erotica, and she appears in many collections of classical images (e.g., Rund 1976c, 1978, 1980, 1983; Discipline 1993)

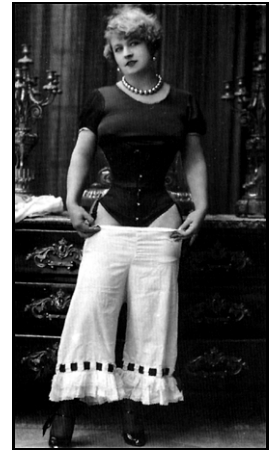


Figure 37: Nativia of Yva Richard, c. 1928 (PC)

By 1931 Yva Richard's product line had "shifted considerably from couture to prints and fetishistic accessories..." (ibid., p. 126). During the 1930's Yva Richard served the literal "slaves of fashion," offering original SM and fetish outfits, paraphernalia, and photographs, as well as kinky novels by publishers such as Select Bibliothèque.

There were two outlets for Yva Richard products: over-the-counter sales and mail order. The firm maintained a retail space in Paris that was open on Tuesday and Friday (ibid., p. 125). From 1927 to 1943 the firm was located at rue Pillet-Will no. 9, an "elegant" office building shared with "three bankers and three insurance companies" located in a bourgeois area close to a red-light district (ibid.).

Yva Richard's primary sales medium, however, was mail-order. From the early years of the firm Yva Richard specialized

³¹ The term "ephemera" refers to price-lists, catalogs, flyers, etc. that are used by a producer to advertise and market their products. Ephemera of early erotica producers can be extremely rare and are collectable items.

in mail-order fashion lingerie and was a pioneer in that market—quite possibly the earliest predecessor to firms such as Victoria’s Secret or Frederick’s of Hollywood today (ibid., p. 124; Vasta-Rund Interview, 1997). Advertisements and ephemera made the firm’s products accessible to a mail-order clientele. The primary advertising venue was mainstream French magazines such as *La Vie Parisienne* and *Le Sourire*. Yva Richard also published English-language ephemera, although there is no available evidence that the firm advertised in English-language magazines. However, their products were made available through resellers in English-speaking countries, and also to those with access to the French publications.

In addition to its own products, Yva Richard purchased material from outside producers that it resold through its distribution system. Outside photographers had produced images used in the firm’s catalogs from its early years, including some of the most prominent photographers of the era such as Albert Wyndham and H. Manuel (Dupouy, p. 123). In the early 1930’s, as Yva Richard’s product line expanded into the bizarre, the firm purchased and resold photographs from one of the most significant European producers of such material: Studio Biederer of Paris.

Little is known about early European sources of SM/fetish photography such as Studio Biederer, including the precise nature of their relationship with public resellers of their material, such as Yva Richard. For example, the question of whether there was artistic collaboration between producers, merchants, and



Figure 38: Yva Richard, c. 1931 (KIRSGR)

practitioners in the production of this material is unanswered. It is clear, however, that these studios played an important creative role in the development of the European Fetish Style. The French in particular produced a colossal quantity of SM and hard media fetishistic photography during the 1930's, and it appears that much of this work was done by Studio Biederer, or at least on the same premises. Illustrating the difficulties involved in sorting out relationships surrounding this work, another prominent studio identifier that appears on SM photographs during this period is OSTRÄ. However, unlike Studio Biederer, which is listed in directories of photographers, no records of OSTRÄ have been found (Vasta-Rund Interview 1997). Considerable physical evidence in the photographs themselves strongly suggests, but does not definitively prove, that Studio Biederer and OSTRÄ are products of the same artist(s) (Vasta-Rund Interview 1997). Such issues are topics of on-going research by dealer-collectors Alexandre Dupouy and Joseph Vasta.

The early twentieth-century shift from predominately soft media to hard media fetishism occurred during the thirty-year period Yva Richard operated, and is clearly reflected in the changing product line of the firm. The timeline reflected in Yva Richard is consistent with other products throughout the world: hard-media fetishism and elaborated, "bizarre," themes took hold by the late 1920's and flourished during the 1930's. Yva Richard, itself a purveyor of original styles as well as a keen observer of fashion trends, throughout this period was at the



Figure 39: Yva Richard, c. 1931 (KIRSGR)

cutting edge of the new style. Following a period of decline that began in the late 1930's, Yva Richard closed in 1943 in a Paris

GANTS

SOUTIENS GORGE

CORSETS

HAUTS TALONS

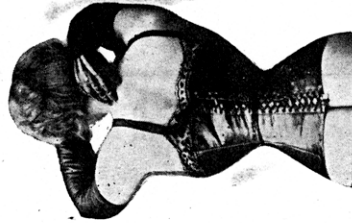
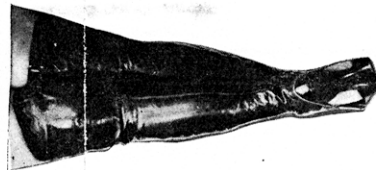
CACHES - SEXE -

GUÊTRES

SENSATIONNEL

LA REINE DU CUIR














L'ESCLAVE ENCHAÎNÉE

Album de Photos
40 Francs
Étranger: **45** Francs

Les deux Albums commandés ensemble
60 Francs
Étranger: **70** Francs

Collection visible le mardi et le vendredi après-midi

TRAVESTIS ET MÉTAMORPHOSES

Corset de cuir brillant noir première qualité, orné de cuir, perforé, lacage dorsal, entièrement doublé peau nuance chair, article riche indéchirable. **550** Fr.

Ceinture de cuir brillant noir, doublée peau couleur chair, spéciale pour taille serrée, lacage dorsal. **275** Fr.

Cache-Sexe en peau souple avec fermoir éclair inviolable.
Prix : Teinte noire. **175** Fr.
Teinte rouge. **200** Fr.

Soutien-Gorge en peau souple, modèle "Loup" avec perforations au centre. **110** Fr.

Gagoules en peau souple avec passage des yeux, fermoir éclair au dos. **165** Fr.

Gants glacés en chevreau montant jusqu'à l'épaule, 36 boutons Passepoils, broderies, boutons ton opposé.
Teintes noir, rouge ou blanc. **350** Fr.

Guêtres en cuir souple, enfermant la jambe, le genou et la cuisse (lacage ou boutonnage). **650** Fr.

Bottes à hauts talons jusqu'à 19 centimètres en cuir souple, lacage devant.
Jusqu'aux genoux. **950** Fr.
Tiges cuisardes. **1.200** Fr.

Souliers à hauts talons, formes variées, Bottier, Charles IX, Salammbô ou Escarpin toutes fantaisies, toutes nuances
Prix. **700** Fr.

Menottes et Entraves en cuir verni, fermeture de sûreté, chaîne métallique réglable ou non.
La Parure. **200** Fr.

Cravaches d'Amazones très souples depuis. **40** Fr.

LINGERIE ANCIENNE et MODERNE - ROBES COURTES - CILS
PERRUQUES - DIADÈMES - COLLIERS - BAS DE SOIE - FRIVOLES

YVA RICHARD, 9, Rue Pillet-Will, PARIS
(20^{ème} Année)

R. C. Seine 98.703

Figure 40: Yva Richard ephemera, c. 1930 (PC)

under Nazi occupation.

2.32 Diana Slip

Until the early-1930's, Yva Richard was the sole occupant of its particular niche in the French fetish market. During the 1930's a competing chain of stores emerged that eventually came into direct competition with Yva Richard and was to surpass it: *Diana Slip*. The general product line of Diana Slip was virtually identical to Yva Richard's, as was the retail/mail-order mode of distribution. Diana Slip sold books and fetishistic clothing, including photography by Studio Biederer and books by publishers such as Select Bibliothèque. They produced "magnificent" catalogs of their products, and marketed their materials on a scale that was impossible for Yva Richard (Dupouy 1994, p. 126).

Whereas Yva Richard was a small, single firm, Diana Slip was part of a conglomerate of several companies. Founded in 1930 as Les Editions Gauloises, in 1936 the group became Les Librairies Nouvelles, a "network of bookstores, shops, press-groups, papers and studios ... grouped in one firm" (Dupouy 1994, p. 126). Diana Slip was one of the companies in this group, and was able to draw upon the considerably greater resources of Les Librairies Nouvelles in its marketing and distribution. John Coutts evidently visited a, or perhaps the, Diana Slip store in Paris, most likely during a European visit in 1936. He commented, "Diana's shop is quite remarkable — just like an ordinary shop, but with all her gadgets, corsets etc. on



Figure 41: Studio Biederer, Paris, c. 1935 (Bélier Press)

show in the window & display cases — just like an ordinary shop.”³²

Libraries Nouvelles and its subsidiary Diana Slip proved to be a commercial juggernaut that overwhelmed its venerable but much smaller competitor. The demise of Yva Richard is closely related to the relatively short-lived hegemony of Diana Slip in their shared market.³³ Both firms experienced a final decline during World War II, and were gone by the end of the war.

2.33 Select Bibliothèque and Librairie Générale

During the late 1920’s and 1930’s there were a small number of French publishers specializing in sadomasochistic and fetishistic novels. These included Select Bibliothèque and Librairie Générale, which I briefly profile below. Many of the works published by these firms had very strong content that reflected an extreme in French development of the European Fetish style. Products of these firms were noted by practitioners and producers in the American Fetish style, and particular motifs found in them, such as the “pony-girl,” were elaborated in



Figure 42: Alan Mac Clyde, *Servitude*, Librairie Générale, 1930 (GK)

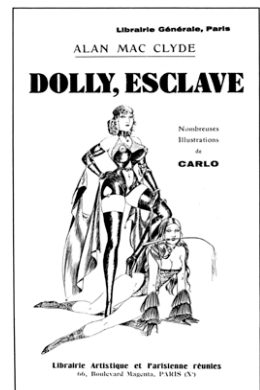


Figure 43: Alan Mac Clyde, *Dolly, Esclave*, Librairie Artistique et Parisienne, 1930 (GK)

³² Coutts letter to Bringman, December 26, 1937 (JBR). Coutts’ 1936 visit to Europe is mentioned in the JASC Interview, p. 5, 13.

³³ In addition to differences in size and resources, Diana Slip aggressively competed with Yva Richard. For example, Diana Slip’s parent company, Librairies Nouvelles, owned magazines that after 1936 refused advertising by Yva Richard (Dupouy, p. 127). Dupouy notes that Yva Richard advertisements diminished in quantity and size after 1936, and the firm began to offer discounts during this period (p. 126-127).

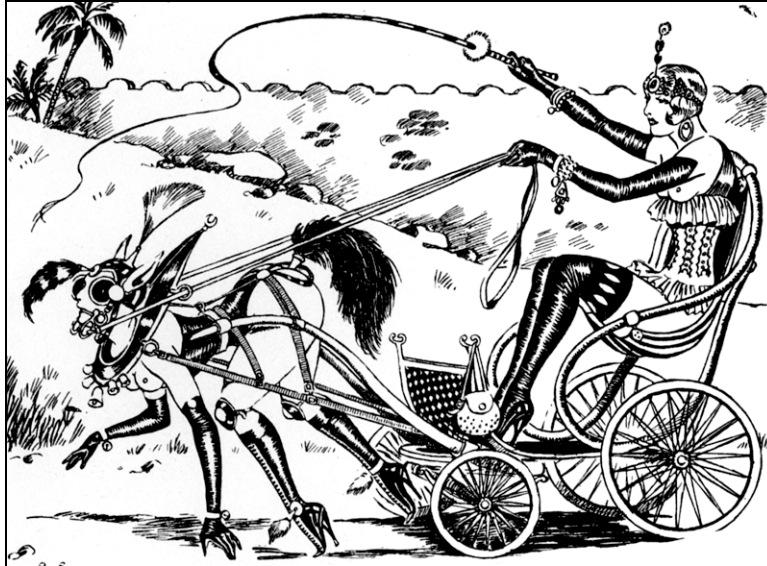


Figure 44: Illustration by Carlo, from Alan Mac Clyde's *Servitude*. 1930 (GK)

contemporary products in the United States.

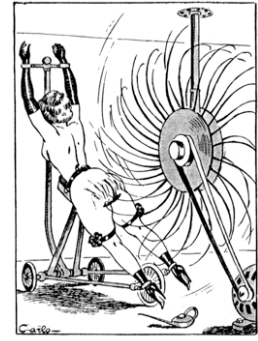
Select Bibliothèque published material from c. 1906 to c. 1939. A 1937 list of the firm's products listed eighty-seven novels, with titles such as *Le Dressage de la Maid-esclave* (1930) (The Training of the Maid-slave), *Attelages humains* (1931) (Humans Harnessed), and *La Reine Esclave* (1927) (The Slave Queen).³⁴ As noted above, these works were resold by Yva Richard and Diana Slip. Prominent themes in these works included flagellation, humiliation, female domination, transvestism, and figure training.

Librairie Générale was a firm that published c. 1929 to c. 1934. Works published by this firm, particularly those written by Alan Mac Clyde, provided exemplary examples of hard media

³⁴ Livre D'efendu, 1937 catalog (KIRSGR vertical file).

sadomasochism. Librairie Artistique et Parisienne is another publisher title associated with Librairie Générale.³⁵

Although almost none of these works have been published in English, a number of English typescripts of these novels circulated among American practitioners and erotica dealers. These typescripts are typically amateur translations, roughly typed on office paper, that would be loaned to friends or rented by adult bookstores.³⁶ Today these typescripts provide concrete examples of the kinds of French texts that were available to early practitioners in the American Fetish style. I provide below an example from a typescript of Alan Mac Clyde's *The Madonna of Polished Leather* (1930). This fine piece of literature clearly expresses the modern SM style in its combination of hard media fetishism, and SM in the form of elaborated domination and submission (explicitly distinguished from flagellation in the text). The novel begins with a bored dominatrix wife placing an ad soliciting "young women and girls, interested in Polished Leather" (p. 1). One of her replies is as follows (p. 2; [lack of] punctuation as in original):



Lucie fessée à la machine

Figure 45: Carlo Illustration from Mac Clyde's *Dolorès Amazone*, Librairie Générale, 1930 (GK)

³⁵ See the titlepage of *Dolly, Esclave* (c. 1930), above, by Alan Mac Clyde, which lists both Librairie Artistique et Parisienne and Librairie Générale.

³⁶ The Kinsey Library has a few of these. For example, Kinsey holdings of Alan MacClyde typescripts include: "Gaol for girls," a translation of *Bagne des femmes* (Librairie Générale, c. 1930); "Horror's dwelling-place," translation of *Cite d'horreur* (Librairie Générale, c. 1933); "The Madonna of Polished Leather," translation of *Madone du cuir verni*, (Librairie Artistique et Parisienne, c. 1930).

But for us, women who love women, we want women, only women, tall and beautiful, in an enchanting setting with strange, suggestive tableaux, which will allow us to see all these beauties exacerbated by the sight of “The Beauty” adorned in Polished Leather and dresses strangely combined, ultra-moulding and mirroring, black satin, lacquered and polished, or even glazed black kid. The most dominant of us shall dominate the others by the passion of Leather and high heels..we shall realize extraordinary scenes where, surrounded by willing slaves, mirrored in polished leather, we shall train splendid virgins to our fetishistic tastes..and Lesbian as well..far from brutal men, subjecting them to adorably voluptuous humiliations: too narrow high polished boots, excessively high heels, polished corsets strangely tightened, high collars of polished leather, veritable yokes, gloves tight enough to hurt, and the adorable virgins will kiss piously with Lesbian kisses the legs and feet of their glazed-kid-adorned mistresses.

Such charming prose! In many Mac Clyde novels, such text was illustrated by Carlo, an early master of art in the hard media modern SM style. Carlo is an extremely significant artist in the development of the European and American Fetish styles, and inspired a number of mid-twentieth century artists. His impeccably bizarre visualizations of intricate SM scenarios would be appropriated and elaborated by later American artists such as Gene Bilbrew and Eric Stanton. As early as the late 1930’s fantasies visualized by Carlo would be captured not only in art, but in photography—as living SM practitioners took the next step of transforming fantasy into reality.



Figure 46: Carlo, c. 1930 (PC)

2.4 Germany

Less is known about German producers than in the British or French cases. Available evidence indicates that SM erotica production in modern style commenced slightly earlier in Germany than in other regions, circa 1926, and ended decisively after the accession of the Nazi regime. As Joseph Vasta notes about materials in the modern SM style (Vasta-Rund interview 1997):

...this isn't a huge bibliography, but for the amount of material that was produced ... starting at about 1926, 1927 and ending at the obvious date, the quality and forcefulness of the material that was created is extraordinary...

Historically, the modal form of German SM “erotica” was pseudo-academic books, rather than the racy magazines and erotic novels that prevailed in Britain and France. These works reflected no aversion to the use of medical terminology (much of which originated with German sexologists), and in these works one finds titillating material presented in a serious, pedantic style that is alien to the generally playful French and British materials. These non-fiction books were advertised in popular culture venues and, as Vasta notes above, tended to be of very high quality—with fine craftsmanship, paper and binding. This is quite unlike the French publishers cited above, whose highly fictitious products more closely resemble pulp paperbacks.

Like the French, German producers created hard media photography and art with SM themes. These appeared in indigenous works and, in the mid-1930's, occasionally in British

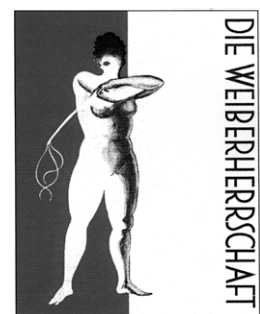


Figure 47: *Die Weiberherrschaft*, Kind and Fuchs, 1930 (Vasta Images)

publications such as *London Life*. This photography is very similar in content to French and American material produced during the 1930's. Interestingly, Joseph Vasta notes that early German SM erotica is extremely rare in France, and vice versa (Vasta-Rund Interview 1997).

As in other regions in the late 1920's and 1930's, there were only a handful of producers who specialized in SM and fetishistic materials. In a configuration that is unique among the three cases examined here, *known* major producers of German SM-fetish materials were linked to a social movement: the Weimar period *Freikörperkultur* or *Nacktkultur* movements (Toepfer 1992; Vasta-Rund Interview 1997).³⁷ Toepfer points out that the *Nacktkultur* movement was an extremely heterogeneous "constellation of subcultures" loosely oriented around nudity and the relationship between the body and nature (Toepfer 1992, p. 65-66). One distinct group within this movement produced a significant amount of material with strongly fetishistic and SM content. Its "mastermind" was Ernst Schertel (1884-1956), who was the force behind the Parthenon publishing company in Leipzig (Toepfer 1992, p. 82; Vasta-Rund interview, 1997). Dating from the mid-1920's, Parthenon published a number of books, often in series, and two magazines.



Figure 48: German hard media fetish, c. 1930. (Bélier Press)

³⁷ It is quite possible that there were other social-organizational foundations for German SM production in the modern style, but I have encountered no evidence concerning such groups. Areas of Weimar-period German culture that warrant future investigation include prostitution and cabaret culture.

With the movement in general, these works retained an interest in nudity and the body, but (Toepfer 1992, p. 83):

unlike other *Nacktkultur* propagandists, the Parthenon cult seemed to accept that nudity could never transcend its association with “unnatural” desire, perverse pleasures, and secret activities. Thus, a number of books in the various series purported to show relations between particular images of the nude body and distinctly “demonic” desires and “strange” drives.

Schertel “more than any other *Nacktkultur* theorist accommodated nudity as an expression of perversion and deviant desire” (ibid., p. 83), and his works explored various aspects of sadomasochism and were replete with fetishistic representations in the modern style. Schertel was a prolific writer, publishing works such as *Das Weib als Göttin* (Woman as Goddess) in 1928; the four volume *Der Flagellantismus als literarisches Motiv* (Flagellation as a Literary Motif) between 1929 and 1932; and the three volume *Der Erotische Komplex* in 1932.

A second author noted in documents of American SM producers was Dr. Alfred Kind (1876-1927), who wrote works such as *Gefilde der Lust* (Fields of Sexual Pleasure), published in 1930, and the 1300 page *Die Weiberherrschaft in der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Female Rule in the History of Mankind), co-authored with Eduard Fuchs, in 1930. These works were published by Verlag für Kulturforschung (Cultural Research Publishers) in Vienna, which published a number of similar works that were also noted by American connoisseurs (John Bringman scrapbook, KIRSGR).



Figure 49: Illustration from Schertel, *Der Flagellantismus als literarisches Motiv*, 1929-1932 (PC)

Germany became a manifestly hostile environment for SM erotica producers after the Nazi regime came to power in January, 1933. This is quite different from Britain, France, and the United States, where modern SM styles underwent significant growth and elaboration during the 1930's. The Nazi government directly and specifically suppressed publishing firms and individual writers who produced SM and fetishistic erotica, including all works ("Sämtliche Schriften") of both Ernst Schertel and Alfred Kind, as well as the entire Parthenon publishing company.³⁸ Available evidence indicates that production of this material ceased in Germany by the mid-1930's, and at least some German producers transferred materials to the United States, and possibly Britain, during this period. J.B. Rund notes that many erotica producers during this period were Jewish (Rund interview, 1996), which may have contributed to the demise of the genre in Nazi Germany.



Figure 50: German hard media, c. 1930 (KIRSGR)

³⁸ Reichsschrifttumskammer, *Liste des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums* (1938), p. 71, 127, 177.

Chapter Three: Foundations of the American Fetish Style, 1930-1949

3.1 Introduction

Bizarre materials inspired by the European Fetish style were first produced in the United States in the early 1930's. In this chapter I address the early years of the primarily heterosexual American Fetish style in the United States. SM practitioner networks and erotica producers associated with the American Fetish style have closely interconnected lines of development that begin in the early 1930's in New York City and continue, through generations of direct personal relationships, to businesses and practitioner networks that exist today. Configured differently than the American Fetish style, homosexual SM networks and organizations underlying the Gay Leather style have a more recent history that begins after World War II—I commence my analysis of the Gay Leather style in chapter five. Here I focus on producer-practitioner networks, organizations, and popular culture products through which the American Fetish style developed in the United States. In the next chapter I address external forces, such as obscenity law, morality organizations, and police persecution that impacted the activities of these producers.

As with the European material addressed in the previous chapter, related aspects of this history can be extended back in time to the nineteenth century and before. For example, early American morality crusades, erotica production, sexual subcultures, etc. have been documented elsewhere (e.g., Chauncey 1994; D'Emilio and Freedman 1988; Gay 1984). My focus is on the subcultural *producers* of the American Fetish style, a relatively small and specialized group.

3.2 Charles Guyette and the foundation of the American Fetish Style

The earliest evidence of U.S. erotica production in the American Fetish style is in New York City in the early 1930's. The history begins with Charles Guyette, a man about whom little is known but who unquestionably was the key producer in the United States in the 1930's. "Charley" Guyette produced SM and fetish paraphernalia and photography, and was a central figure in mid-century practitioner networks. According to John Coutts, Guyette: "ran everything, you know, all the way round...".³⁹ Connected to Guyette was a geographically far-flung social circle composed of amateur erotica producers and practitioners. This is the earliest known SM/fetish practitioner network in the United States, which served as the social nucleus of the American Fetish style. As I elaborate below, during the 1930's and 1940's key producers of American fetishistic erotica, both underground and mainstream (e.g., fetishistic "cheesecake"), were linked directly and indirectly to the social circle surrounding Guyette.

Guyette was a businessman whose background prior to entering the SM/fetish market was in burlesque and theatrical supplies. In the early 1930's Guyette operated a store in New York City at 116 East 11th Street where he and his brother



Figure 51: Guyette *London Life* ad, July 27, 1935 (KIRSGR)

³⁹ JASC Interview, p. 36.

sold costumes and shoes.⁴⁰ John Coutts noted that Guyette was “the main supplier of ‘strip tease’ accessories before the war (1939),” and was known as “the G string king.” Coutts also noted that “before the war his photos (mainly high heels) were known all over the world. ... In fact he was the only source, as far as I know, of ultra high heels in the USA.”⁴¹ Although the nature of his business changed over time, Guyette continued to provide fetish costumes to U.S. erotica producers and practitioners through the 1950’s.⁴²

The earliest evidence of Guyette activity is in 1933. Joseph Vasta reports that Guyette wrote a letter to the editor of *London Life* that was published on February 25, 1933.⁴³ He was a regular advertiser in *London Life* in 1934 and 1935, and his advertisements, similar to that pictured above, appeared in a number of *London Life* issues.⁴⁴ In addition to photographs, Guyette offered “back number magazines and papers” through international mail-order (*London Life* ad, Feb. 3, 1934). Like other producers who advertised in *London Life*, Guyette submitted materials for publication in the magazine.



Figure 52: Guyette fetish, c. 1934/1938 (Bélier Press)

⁴⁰ Two sources have given different, similar, street addresses for Guyette: 45th St. (West), between 8th & 9th Ave; and 46th St. (West), between 7th & 8th Ave.

⁴¹ Coutts letter to Gebhard, Dec. 15, 1960; PHGA.

⁴² See “Burmel data, July 1961,” KIRSGR Vertical File, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.) — Burmel*.

⁴³ Unfortunately, Vasta sold that particular issue to a private collector in late 1996 and I have been unable to obtain a copy. KIRSGR does not hold this issue.

⁴⁴ I have noted Guyette advertisements in the following issues of *London Life*: Feb. 3, 1934; Jan. 26, 1935; Feb. 23, 1935; Mar. 9, 1935; June 1, 1935; July 13, 1935; July 27, 1935; Aug. 17, 1935; Aug. 24, 1935. All are similar in format and content to the advertisement pictured above.

Photographs of wrestling girls attributed to Guyette appeared in *London Life* on February 23, 1935, and “Ju-Jitsuite” female domination photographs of a Guyette model appeared in the December 10, 1938 issue of *London Life*.

Guyette produced a prodigious quantity of material. During the 1930’s and early 1940’s, thousands of fetish and SM photographs were marketed by Guyette, on topics ranging from high-heeled shoes to genital torture.⁴⁵ Variations in compositional style, settings, props, models, dimensions, and quality point to a number of producers of “Guyette” photography. Like Yva Richard and Diana Slip, Guyette drew from multiple sources for these photographs, which were commercially reproduced in photo-sets and distributed internationally through mail order.

The account of Guyette’s entry into the SM/fetish market, as well as evidence in the products themselves, highlights a close relationship between producers in the European Fetish style and early American producers. In an interview conducted before his death in the 1970’s, J.B. Rund asked Guyette how he came to enter the SM erotica business (Rund interview, 1996). Guyette told Rund that this part of his business developed following a direct European contact during the 1930’s, when two Germans entered his New York store. This European contact cannot be

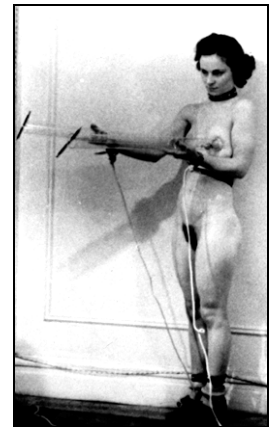


Figure 53: *Bizarre* tubes—American style props, Guyette c. 1934/1938 (KIRSGR)



Figure 54: Guyette bondage, c. 1934/1938 (Béliér Press)

⁴⁵ This date range for Guyette’s fetish photography production is mentioned in Irving Klaw’s letter to Paul Gebhard, January 19, 1961 (PHGA). It is consistent with other sources as well as my and J.B. Rund’s examination of a large sample of the hundreds of Guyette photographs in the Kinsey photography collection.

precisely dated at this time, but occurred during one of two periods: either c. 1934 or c. 1938. The Germans, whose identities are not known, proposed that Guyette market fetishistic shoes crafted in Germany. They also brought with them fetishistic photographs and negatives. It is important to note that such materials would have been difficult to market during the 1930's, and Guyette's theatrical store—which specialized in unusual costumes used in burlesque—was a plausible outlet for “bizarre” fetish merchandise. Guyette obviously accepted the proposal.⁴⁶

This account of a German connection is supported in physical evidence found in “Guyette” photography, where one encounters a number of complexities regarding sources. It is clear that much Guyette photography was produced in the United States and involved members of U.S. practitioner networks. Other “Guyette” photographs were German in origin, and later resold by Guyette. A quite interesting category of Guyette photography employs American models wearing costumes that appeared in earlier German photography. For example, a costume that appears in German photographs circa 1930 reappears in Guyette photographs done in the United States circa 1938. Such evidence found in “Guyette” photographs, combined with Guyette's account of his entry into



Figure 55: Guyette Ponygirl, U.S. c. 1934/1938. Seated model wears outfit seen in German photographs c. 1930—see Figure 48, p. 68 above (KIRSGR).

⁴⁶ The timing of the contact suggests a connection with political developments in Germany, where Hitler was appointed Chancellor on January 30, 1933. The Nazi government acted quickly to suppress “obscene” materials: a February 23, 1933 decree banned display of indecent publications in bookshops, kiosks, and magazine stands (Grau 1995, p. 29-31).

the SM-fetish market, indicates that a number of individuals, both German and American, were involved in producing materials sold by Guyette. There is no direct evidence that Guyette himself was a photographer (this is certainly possible), but some of his practitioner friends and associates clearly were.

Guyette photography has very strong content when compared with material produced during the late 1940's and 1950's in the United States. It includes full nudity (male and female), bizarre apparatuses, and explicit sadomasochistic torture. The content of this photography displays affinities with and inspiration from contemporary European material. For example, themes such as the "pony girl" explored in the literature of Alan Mac Clyde and the artwork of Carlo were enacted with real models in Guyette photographs.⁴⁷ In addition, American costumes evidently inspired by European models appeared in Guyette photography, such as the bizarre metal fetish outfit marketed by Yva Richard in the early 1930's.⁴⁸ The American version was made by John Bringman (pseudonym), a Chicago native and Guyette associate, in the late 1930's.⁴⁹

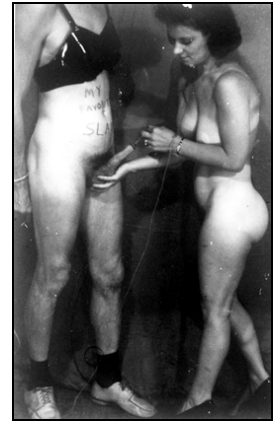


Figure 56: Electrical genitorture, Guyette c. 1934/1938 (PC)

⁴⁷ Specific mention of Carlo is found in a Coutts letter to John Bringman (n.d., 1937-1938; JBR). Coutts thanks Bringman for copies of Carlo drawings and comments: "heavens what an ingenious bird he is."

⁴⁸ The Yva Richard metal outfit is pictured above (see Figure 38, p. 59). Another metal fetish outfit, this one manufactured by Diana Slip, is mentioned in Coutts' letter to Bringman, Dec. 26, 1937 (JBR).

⁴⁹ "John Bringman" is a significant behind-the-scenes figure in the history of the American Fetish style. Bringman produced fetish photographs and, as noted here, manufactured bizarre costumes that appeared in Guyette photographs. He was well connected in practitioner networks in both New York and

There are early differences, however, between the European fetish and American Fetish styles. For example, where European producers tended to rely on traditional props, such as the classical dungeon equipment found in many Studio Biederer photographs, one finds in 1930's Guyette photography modern and more technologically oriented props, such as electrical torture devices and medical apparatuses. This affinity for techno-fetish costume and situations was apparently an early innovation of American producers. It was a noted feature of later works published by American producers such as Irving Klaw (c. 1958).

Guyette's business activities came to an abrupt halt in August, 1935, when he was indicted and pled guilty to two charges of depositing in the mail "certain nonmailable matter, to wit, certain obscene and lewd pictures..."⁵⁰ The contents of these obscene pictures were not specified in Guyette's indictment, nor is there specific mention of sadism, masochism, fetishism, etc.. It stated only that the "pictures are of such obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy character that a further description thereof would defile this Court, and therefore such description is not set forth in this indictment."

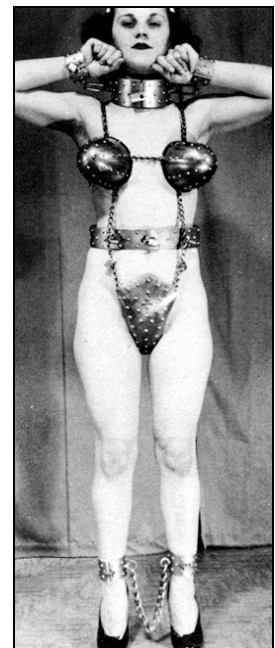


Figure 57: Bringman chain outfit, Guyette c. 1934/1938. (Bélier Press) Compare with Figure 38, p. 59 above.

Chicago in the United States, and was an avid collector of bizarre materials from around the world.

J.B. Rund visited Bringman at his Chicago home in the mid-1970's, where Bringman indicated that he had created metal costumes that appeared in Guyette photography (Rund interview, 1996). Further evidence of this is found in correspondence from Coutts to Bringman, entrusted to Rund by Bringman during this visit.

⁵⁰ Case docket C-97-253, U.S. v. Charles Guyette (August 1935), NARA—NE.

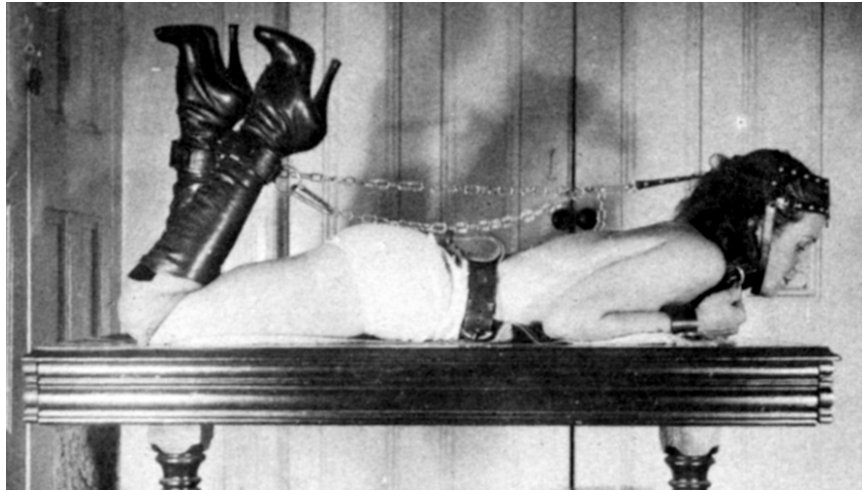


Figure 58: Charles Guyette, c. 1934/1938 (Bélier Press)

Guyette was sentenced to one year and one day in the federal penitentiary in Lewisburgh, PA, where he was delivered on Sept. 6, 1935. He returned to his business after release, but was evidently quite sensitive to publicity.⁵¹ I have encountered no Guyette advertisements or explicit attributions in *London Life* after 1935. By the mid-1940's he was evidently out of the SM-fetish photography business, although as noted above he sold fetish costumes through the 1950's, and by the early 1960's was a dealer in exotic animals.⁵²

As I elaborate below, from Guyette's social circle in the 1930's a chain of personal and professional relationships begins that extends through four generations to major SM producers

⁵¹ As late as 1960, Guyette was circumspect about discussing his past activities with outsiders (Gebhard letter to Guyette, December 20, 1960, PHGA).

⁵² Guyette's later exotic animal business is confirmed by two sources, both of whom visited Guyette's home during the 1960's.

and subcultural networks that exist today, as well as a variety of popular culture media.⁵³

3.3 Related Mainstream American Publications: The American Fetish Style and Cheesecake, 1930-1949

The late 1930's saw the first infiltration of subcultural fetishistic/SM material into American popular culture. In this section I profile the direct influence of producers in the American Fetish style on producers of widely distributed popular culture materials. This is the beginning of the development of SM as a "cultural" style in the United States.

Even in his period of greatest visibility in the early 1930's, Charles Guyette was a sub rosa producer of erotica. During the 1930's and 1940's there were a number of widely distributed popular culture products that employed fetishistic themes, similar to but much milder than Guyette's material.⁵⁴ Of particular significance are a number of "cheesecake" magazines published from the 1930's to the early 1950's.



Figure 59: "5 feet 11 inches of ultra-thrilling pulchritude." A typical "cheesecake" image. Eyeful magazine, Dec. 1948. (PC)

⁵³ In the course of my research I have discovered a chain of relationships that link Guyette to HOM, one of the major producers of SM/fetish videos and magazines in the United States today. Another chain of relationships leads to Kim Christy, today a publisher of various fetish/TV/TS films and magazines, including *FMI—Female Mimics International*. I elaborate these at appropriate points in the presentation below.

⁵⁴ Books with SM content, primarily flagellation, were published in the United States during the 1930-49 period by publishers such as the Falstaff and Gargoyle Presses (see Gertzman 1992; for illustrative ephemera see *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century)* Gargoyle Press, KIRSGR vertical file). Publishers of these works often advertised in cheesecake magazines. However, I am aware of no American equivalent during this early period to authors such as Alan Mac Clyde.

The history of “cheesecake” as a popular culture phenomenon begins long before the 1930’s, but it was during the 1930’s and particularly the 1940’s that fetishistic and SM representations in the modern style began to appear in the genre. Providing a definition of three relevant categories, Meyerowitz writes (1996, p. 10):

In the early twentieth century, a new language emerged to represent the unstable categories of a new taxonomy of sexual display. The American slang “cheesecake” entered the common parlance around 1915 as a term for publicly acceptable, mass-produced images of semi-nude women. As “cheesecake” spread through the popular culture, the term “borderline material” came to refer to erotic imagery that stretched the gap between respectable cheesecake and illicit pornography. Cheesecake, borderline material, and pornography did not progressively unveil the reality of sex or of women’s bodies; rather, they removed some images of women’s bodies from the margins of obscenity to the center of mainstream popular culture.

SM/fetish, even in very mild representations, was a “borderline” category and cultural flashpoint throughout the mid-century period.⁵⁵ Over the forty-year period addressed in this dissertation, erotica producers were constantly pushing the boundaries of “borderline” material. Moral entrepreneurs and agencies of social control fought a steady but losing battle against this trend, and gradually material that was once actionable as pornographic entered the mainstream.⁵⁶ In the case of SM/fetish,



Figure 60: Early American Cheesecake: *Film Fun* magazine, March 1938 (PG)

⁵⁵ Meyerowitz (1996, p. 11), drawing from the current literature, periodizes SM and fetishistic images in the cheesecake genre as a 1940’s phenomenon. It is clear (see below) that such infiltration occurred earlier—by the 1930’s in the United States.

⁵⁶ In the next chapter I focus on the actions of law enforcement and morality organizations against erotica producers, including both cheesecake and producers of more

one of the most important early routes of this popularization was cheesecake.

During the 1930-70 period hundreds of cheesecake magazines were published, with a particularly large increase of titles and publishers during the 1950's.⁵⁷ Later imitators followed stylistic conventions that were established by a small number of early producers of the 1930's and 40's. An early example frequently noted by consultants is *Film Fun*, a contemporary of *London Life* whose content bore some resemblance to the film/theater elements of the British magazine. *Film Fun* was a "totally sexy" magazine filled with extremely suggestive images,⁵⁸ a feature that earned it membership on a February 12, 1940 "permanently banned publications" list of one of the most powerful censorship organizations of the day, the Catholic National Organization for Decent Literature (NODL). *Film Fun* was eventually denied second-class mailing privileges on grounds of obscenity on July 22, 1942, which evidently led to the magazine's folding.⁵⁹

The preeminent cheesecake publisher of the 1940's and early 1950's was Robert Harrison, whose magazines appropriated a number of stylistic conventions from *Film Fun* and other antecedents, such as the *National Police Gazette*. The Harrison magazines were ubiquitous popular culture products,

explicit SM material (p. 121 below). I shall also address the related genre relevant to the Gay Leather style: "beefcake."

⁵⁷ See Betrock 1994 for a large bibliography of the genre.

⁵⁸ Vasta-Rund interview, 1997. Visually, the erotic content of *Film Fun* is similar to a Victoria's Secret catalog today.

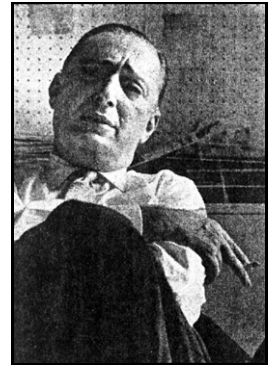


Figure 61: Publisher Robert Harrison, c. 1955 (Newsweek)



Figure 62: *Beauty Parade*, July 1951 (GK)

and Harrison continued to add new titles to his array of cheesecake publications, each with a slightly different focus, through 1947. The first Harrison cheesecake magazine was *Beauty Parade*, published from Oct. 1941-Feb. 1952, followed by *Eyeful* (Mar. 43-Apr. 55), *Titter* (Aug. 43-Apr. 55), *Wink* (Summer 44-Apr. 55), *Whisper* (Apr. 46-1970's), and *Flirt* (Dec. 47-Apr. 55).⁶⁰ Harrison dropped most of his cheesecake titles in 1955, maintaining only *Whisper*, which focused on the scandal/expose genre. From Dec. 1952 he published *Confidential* magazine, like *Whisper* a scandal/expose publication, that continued to be published through the 1970's. The "confidential" genre continues today, and is exemplified by tabloids such as the *National Enquirer*.

In terms of the social networks under examination here, there is clear evidence of influence by members of the Guyette social circle on these popular culture products. Specifically, multiple sources converge on an account of a concrete and substantial linkage between Guyette and key early cheesecake publishers. In the JASC interview, John Coutts stated (p. 14):

Sometime, when I'm not sure, Charlie Guyette in New York, who had a mailing list of these people, and who was selling shoes and stuff, he got in touch with — he knew rather the woman who was putting out the *Police Gazette*, I think it was, and they got a certain amount of this stuff there, and then she was somehow connected with Harrison, and Harrison started turning out his famous girlie books — *Titter*, *Wink* ...



Figure 63: "Should babes be spanked?"
Wink, Oct. 1949 (GK)

⁵⁹ July 23, 1942 Press Release, Information Service, Post Office Department (USPOL).

⁶⁰ Harrison publication date ranges are from Betrock 1994.

On September 18, 1958, Paul Gebhard recorded a set of oral notes based on fieldwork in the New York area. They included the following under the heading “Sadomasochism in Popular Magazines,” which provides further details on this contact:

... many years ago the *Police Gazette* was in economic difficulties. The *Police Gazette* hired a woman named Edythe Farrell, who tried to increase the circulation. In her attempts to do this she got in contact with a costumer, and asked him about what costumes might be used in their photographs. He gave her a photograph of a woman wearing high boots, a rather typical masochistic type photograph. Edythe Farrell was not impressed by this, but they did run it in the *Police Gazette*, using it as a matter of fact as a cover photograph. And the edition sold out. From that time on, Edythe Farrell became aware of the sales value of sadistic, fetishistic, and bondage material, and used it for the *Police Gazette* to build up its circulation.

At a later date Mr. Harrison, who before he developed the magazine *Confidential* was putting out a number of cheesecake magazines such as *Whisper*, *Titter*, *Wink*, others, he also hired Edythe Farrell, and she used the same formula for these magazines, seeing to it that each issue had some amount of sadomasochism, bondage or fetishism, and this resulted in increased sales.⁶¹

The “costumer” was Charles Guyette.⁶² Gebhard concluded this brief note by stating that he corroborated this account with two additional sources⁶³ (i.e. Gebhard used a total of three



Figure 65: Cheesecake dominatrix. *Beauty Parade*, Nov. 1945 (GK)

⁶¹ Paul H. Gebhard Transcribed Notes, Disc 1, Side A, Sep. 18, 1958. These notes, examples of treasures located in the KIRSGR files, were originally recorded on an Edison Dictaphone machine and probably all transcribed shortly thereafter. Most do not contain confidential information and are now located in the general-access KIRSGR vertical file. See my finding aid at KIRSGR for locations.

⁶² Dr. Gebhard also mentioned the connection between the Guyette group and the Harrison magazines to me during an August, 1996 interview.

⁶³ These sources are cited in the original notes. As a result of Gebhard's field investigation of the relationship between Guyette and the “cheesecake” genre, the evidentiary basis for this claim is unusually strong.



Figure 64: “All babes are wolves.” *Eyeful*, Feb. 1950 (GK)

independent sources). A July 11, 1955 *Newsweek* article, “The Curious Craze for ‘Confidential’ Magazines,” identified Edythe Farrell as one of Robert Harrison’s “early associates,” and provided a more precise quantification of Ms. Farrell’s success⁶⁴ (p. 51):

Edythe Farrell, 41, was once the successful editor of the *Police Gazette*, where she engineered a spectacular revival from 38,000 to 250,000 circulation.

Although there clearly are many forces at play in the early development and cultural promulgation of the American Fetish style, the importance of this concrete connection cannot be overemphasized. Guyette’s own distribution had reached a very small, subcultural, audience. In contrast, popular tabloids such as the *National Police Gazette* and cheesecake magazines reached a readership of hundreds of thousands each month. As *London Life* was a key conduit of the modern fetish style from subcultural producers to popular culture in the English speaking world outside the United States, within the U.S. the milder genre of “cheesecake” played an equivalent role.

There are other connections between subcultural SM/fetish producers and popular media during this period. A handful of key artists and photographers worked in both media. For example, from the late 1940’s artists such as John Coutts sold work to Robert Harrison, who published his cartoon series

⁶⁴ Ms. Farrell’s employ by Robert Harrison was after May 1943, when she was listed as “editor” on vol. 148, no. 5 of the *National Police Gazette*. Consultant Yogi Klein, who has a large collection of Harrison magazines, informs me that the fetishistic content of these magazines commences around 1944.

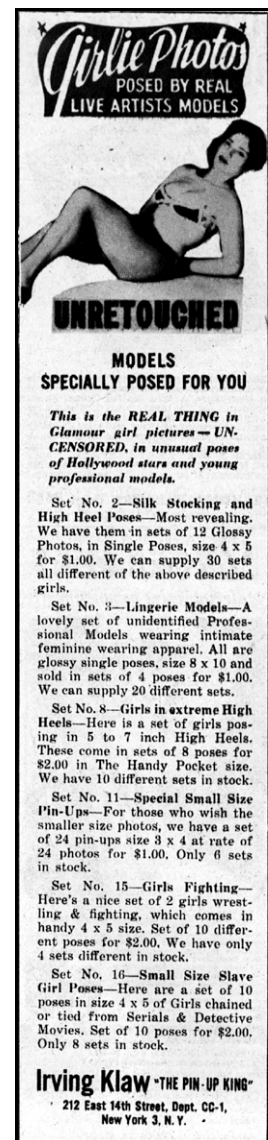


Figure 66: Irving Klaw ad, *Eyeful*, Dec. 1948 (PC)

The Diary of a French Maid in *Flirt* (1948-1950). In addition, SM/fetish/bondage publishers such as Irving Klaw extensively advertised in cheesecake magazines. In a particularly noteworthy case, one of my consultants reports that Leonard Burtman, one of the most significant twentieth-century American publishers of SM and fetish erotica (1954-1970's), received early training as a photographer and editor working for Robert Harrison. I discuss Burtman and his enterprises in the next chapter.

3.4 John Coutts and *Bizarre*: 1932-1949

3.41 Coutts' entry into the SM-fetishist network and initial contact with the Guyette social circle

John Coutts (1902-1962), who used the pseudonym John Willie, became an important figure in the history of SM and fetish erotica in the United States in the mid-1940's. Coutts was a renaissance man of fetish—a writer, producer of fetish footwear, artisan of fetish props, expert in bondage technique, and a prolific artist and photographer. Between 1946 and 1956 Coutts produced 20 issues of *Bizarre* magazine as well as a number of cartoons, photographs, and art works.⁶⁵ However, his involvement with members of the Guyette social circle predated the publication of *Bizarre* by nearly a decade. At the time of Coutts' first contact with the American network during the 1930's, he lived in Australia. He moved to the United States and became a publisher after military service during World War II.

Drawing from contemporary correspondence and later interview data⁶⁶ it is possible to reconstruct many details of

⁶⁵ Issues twenty-one (1957) through twenty-six (1959) of *Bizarre* were published by “a close friend, R.E.B.” (Rund 1974, p. ix).

Major reprints of Coutts material include the seminal *The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline*, published in 1974 by J.B. Rund, and the recent reprint of *Bizarre* magazine in a two-volume edition edited by fetish photographer Eric Kroll (Kroll 1995).

⁶⁶ I refer to the JASC interview, held at KIRSGR; “JASC” = John Alexander Scott Coutts. This “interview,” which Coutts referred to as a “dictation,” was conducted in Arizona in Dec. 1961-Jan. 1962 after Coutts was stricken with brain cancer.

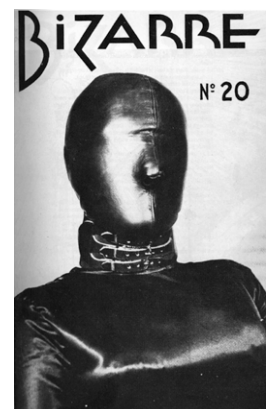


Figure 67: Coutts, *Bizarre* #20 (1956) (PC)

Coutts' early development.⁶⁷ Although Coutts' biography is itself quite interesting, I am concerned here to use Coutts' case to illustrate the operation of a network of SM/fetish aficionados, international in scope, that existed from the 1930's. My discussion of Coutts in this chapter covers his activities from 1932 to 1949: his formative years in Australia and initial years after emigrating to North America. In this section (3.41) I focus on Coutts' entry into the international fetish/SM network and first contact with the Guyette social circle. In section 3.42 I address *London Life* and the origins of *Bizarre* magazine. In section 3.43 I address Coutts' early years in America, from 1945 to 1949.

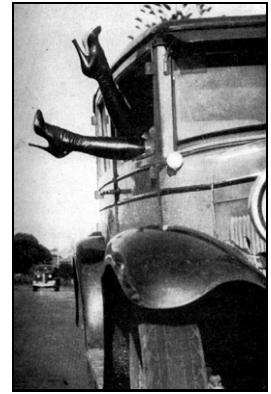


Figure 68: Coutts, Australia, c. 1935-38. Printed in *Bizarre* #2 (1946) (PC)

To provide some background on this interview: in 1960 Paul Gebhard, aware of Coutts' tremendous knowledge of the fetish/SM world, attempted to bring Coutts to the Kinsey Institute to work for three days as a consultant (see Gebhard letter to Coutts, Dec. 2, 1960; PHGA). Gebhard's objective was "a general discussion and brain-picking concerning fetishism and sado-masochism," as well as to enlist Coutts' help in classifying SM and fetish photographs in the Kinsey photography collection by producer. (This is a desperately needed project still pending in 1997.) Unfortunately, Coutts was busy with a variety of projects and at first declined the suggestion. When he was later willing, his deteriorating health made the trip impossible. The tape recorded dictation was devised as a alternative to a Bloomington visit, given Coutts' physical condition.

Future scholars of SM and fetishism should take note that the JASC interview is a tremendously valuable historical document, well worth a trip to the Kinsey Institute.

⁶⁷ The two primary sources for this early (1930's) information are contemporary correspondence between Coutts and John Bringman (1937-38), held by JBR, and the JASC interview (1961-62). Not surprisingly given the passage of time, there are inconsistencies between points mentioned in both the contemporary correspondence and later interview, although these are not severe. In such cases I rely on the contemporary correspondence, which one can reasonably assume will be more accurate.

Coutts was a British citizen born in Singapore in 1902. After a childhood in Britain he lived in Australia where he eked out a living as a manual laborer and sign painter. He entered the fetish network circa 1932, when he wandered into the MacNaught shoe store in Sydney, Australia (JASC interview, p. 13). MacNaught, mentioned in the discussion of *London Life* above, was a producer of fetishistic, high heeled shoes that contributed photographs and advertised in *London Life* magazine.⁶⁸

During his initial visit to MacNaught, Coutts was shown copies of *London Life* magazine for the first time, and a Mr. W. of MacNaught placed Coutts in contact with a retired mariner in Sydney who sold high heeled shoes using the trade name and pseudonym “Achilles” (JASC interview, p. 4-7). Achilles was a seller of high-heeled shoes who regularly corresponded and advertised in *London Life* magazine.⁶⁹ He was also locally known, and ran a “high-heeled club” for aficionados of fetish shoes in Sydney (JASC interview, p. 5). Coutts visited Achilles, who also showed him copies of *London Life* magazine, and the two became friends (ibid.).

⁶⁸ I have noted MacNaught advertisements and attributed photographs in two issues of *London Life*: Jan. 26, 1935, Nov. 2, 1935.

⁶⁹ An Achilles advertisement from *London Life* is pictured above (p. 54). In my review of *London Life* I have noted one Achilles letter published on Sep. 29, 1934 (p. 55) and two early Achilles ads: May 11, 1935 and June 1, 1935. Later Achilles ads are by Coutts, and include ads published on Feb. 5, 1938 and March 5, 1938.

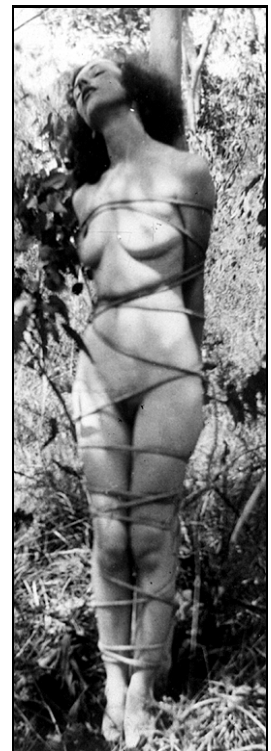


Figure 69: Coutts, Australia, c. 1935-38 (PC)

It was Achilles who placed Coutts in contact with the American social circle surrounding Guyette. Achilles gave Coutts the name and address of John Bringman (introduced above, footnote 49, p. 76), Guyette's photographer, metal craftsman friend in Chicago.⁷⁰ Coutts began his first letter to Bringman, "I have just heard of you from an old friend of mine ... known to readers of *London Life* as 'Achilles.' As far as I can gather you have some remarkably fine photographs..." This letter initiated a two-year correspondence in which Coutts and Bringman exchanged ideas, drawings, photographs, catalogs, and contacts. In turn, it was through Bringman that Coutts later met members of the New York circle, including Guyette. In a letter written to J.B. Rund on January 5, 1976,⁷¹ Bringman wrote of Coutts:

I hosted him while he was in Chicago, in his trek to New York, and visited him many times after he took up residence there. I arranged for many tête à tête while in NYC and started him off in a select circle of devotees of the high heel, etc., only to eventually lose him when he went to the west coast.

This "select circle" included some of the most prominent members of the early heterosexual SM/fetish network in the United States, as well as major erotica producers.



Figure 70: Close-up of Coutts watercolor, evidently based on study photo above (Bélier Press)

⁷⁰ Coutts letter to Bringman, August 1937 (JBR). The obvious and in fact only plausible explanation for Achilles having Bringman's name is through correspondence sparked by the Achilles advertisements in *London Life*.

⁷¹ Bringman contacted Rund following Rund's publication of *The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline* (Rund 1974).

3.42 *London Life* and the origins of *Bizarre* magazine.

London Life was the direct inspiration for Coutts' later *Bizarre* magazine, and Coutts' experience with *London Life* illustrates the central role played by the magazine in the SM/fetish network of the 1930's. Coutts' first published work was in *London Life*, in the Feb. 23, 1935 and Dec. 28, 1935 issues, although in the second and possibly the first case the material was pirated and submitted by others. Coutts outlined the origin of the December, 1935 *London Life* drawing in an Oct. 10, 1937 letter to Bringman, which illustrates the network outlined above working in reverse. He wrote:

... one day I did a sketch of a girl in which I endeavored to combine something of every kink mentioned in *London Life*. I wrote a letter, the gist of which was that a girl who found her lover reading L.L. might be in a bit of a quandary as to what his kink was, & so I hoped that the readers would say if they found it pleased them from their particular angle. ...

I showed it to Achilles, and he let it lie about his office & then showed it to "Macnaughts" (the shoe people). They sent it in to *London Life*, & got an excellent advertisement out of it. *London Life* ran a competition & some people got a few quid out of it. Not only did I get nothing, but the L.L. people must touch up & alter my sketch out of all recognition. You may remember the "*London Life* girl" with the little sketches around the sides which appeared about 18 months ago. All chains, whips & straps were removed, & to my mind it practically ruined the whole sketch.⁷²

The episode captures Coutts' ambivalent relationship with *London Life*, a magazine that he avidly read and later used in his own work, but also found frustratingly difficult and conservative. He attempted to contribute to the correspondence



Figure 71: Coutts drawing, published in *London Life* Dec. 28, 1935 (PC)

⁷² The *London Life* caption to this drawing stated: "The clever design covering page 47 was drawn and put together by the firm of McNaught and Co., of Sydney, Australia."

section of *London Life*, but as of October, 1937 various letters he had written to *London Life* had not been published. He wrote Bringman (ibid.):

I know this because I have written several—under different names, in different styles—thanking other writers as N.Y.K., Persinus, Macintoshed Mollie etc.—and they are never published—so how on earth can we expect others to contribute. Also why cut out all chains etc. from my sketch — I'll admit it was one of my worst efforts — but still?

The reason his letters were not published, Coutts suspected, was that their content was too strong.

Coutts' frustration with the conservatism of *London Life* contributed to an idea that had crystallized in his mind soon after his entry into the SM/fetish network in 1932: to publish a kink magazine explicitly modeled on but better than *London Life*. He stated in 1961 that soon after his initial visit to MacNaught, "I thought, I can turn out a better magazine than *London Life*. Certainly I can do a lot better than the artists in here."⁷³ For over a decade Coutts actively worked toward this goal, and although he submitted proofs for *Bizarre* #1 to a printer in London prior to World War II, *Bizarre* magazine would not be published until 1946.



Figure 72: MacNaught of Sydney, publicity photo published in *London Life*, Nov. 2, 1935. (PC)

⁷³ JASC Interview, p. 5. In addition, in his Jan. 10, 1938 and June/July 1938 (n.d.) letters to Bringman Coutts explicitly linked *London Life* and his magazine project.

Publishing a new magazine was beyond the financial means of Coutts in the mid-1930's. During his years in Australia Coutts lived a bohemian lifestyle, in which he alternated between pursuit of his "hobby," fetish photography and art, and forays into the "outback" as a manual laborer. At times his work would place him sixty miles from the nearest post office.⁷⁴ Coutts noted that he was "perpetually broke," and money earned would quickly be spent on film, camera equipment, and fetish paraphernalia.⁷⁵ In the mid-1930's Coutts was actively seeking financial backing for his magazine project, and in 1936 he traveled to England in an unsuccessful search for funding (JASC interview, p. 5). By 1937 Coutts had devised an alternate plan to finance his magazine: he decided to build a mailing list of aficionados and supporters he could call upon to purchase and financially back his magazine.

Coutts' friend Achilles had compiled an international mailing list of approximately 300 names, and he gave this list to Coutts.⁷⁶ However, Coutts found Achilles' list to be "completely bugged" and he was forced to start from scratch. Coutts' plan was to advertise in *London Life* and utilize the network that could be accessed through the magazine. However, *London Life*, evidently concerned about the authenticity of prospective advertisers, insisted that Coutts work through an established and



Figure 73: Achilles boots. Coutts, c. 1938. (PC)

⁷⁴ Coutts letter to Bringman, Oct. 10, 1937 (JBR).

⁷⁵ JASC interview, p. 5; Coutts letter to Bringman, April 2, 1938 (JBR).

⁷⁶ Coutts letter to Bringman, Feb. 23, 1938. This number provides an indicator of the scale of responses to a fetishist advertisement in *London Life* in the early and mid-1930's.

trusted firm: MacNaught of Sydney. In a bizarre twist on *Bizarre*, this requirement pushed Coutts into a completely different enterprise: fetish shoemaking. He wrote to Bringman:

I am having one perfect hell of a time here with my magazine scheme & *London Life*. Some slight move has been made, but L.L. are an impossible crowd to deal with, and again it all has to be done through Macnaughts. ... To satisfy *London Life* we have to work, as I've said, through Macnaughts. To satisfy Macnaughts we have to deal in shoes & the trouble is that Macnaughts can't make them because they don't know how. To attain my objective of getting a good mailing list I obviously must please my customers — therefore I am compelled to make shoes — as I am compelled to advertise them. You have probably by now lost complete track of what I'm talking about, which will give you some idea of the chaos that exists in my poor head as a result of it all.

In 1937-38 Coutts advertised as “Achilles” in *London Life* magazine, making himself visible to the desired population from which to develop his mailing list. He wrote to Bringman (n.d.; c. spring 1938; JBR):

Incidentally if you still read *London Life* don't worry about Achilles' new advertisement — it's all part & parcel of my scheme to get the magazine started, as by that means I hope to get a mailing list through layer & more pulling adverts

Respondents to these advertisements would be added to Coutts' mailing list. He wrote, “I can then turn around & suggest that each one who replies becomes a subscriber to a new little magazine.”⁷⁷ As for the shoes, Coutts intentionally priced them at outrageous levels. He wrote to Bringman, “To avoid receiving orders for shoes I priced my cheapest at 5 guineas i.e. 21 dollars”⁷⁸—very expensive indeed in 1938! However, despite his best efforts to price himself out of the market, orders arrived

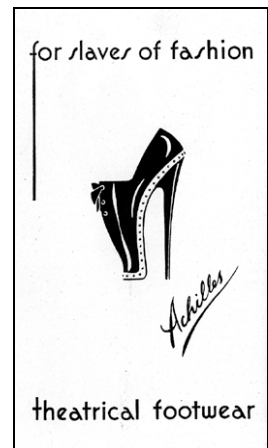


Figure 74: Rear cover of *Bizarre* #2 (1946) (PC)

⁷⁷ Coutts letter to Bringman, Feb. 23, 1938 (JBR).

and Coutts found himself scrambling to produce shoes (JASC interview, p. 7):

Well, unfortunately, my first order came through—of course, I had no money—I didn't know how I would pay the shoemaker for the first shoe he made, but I managed somehow to stall the buyer who had sent this £5 in. I made up all sorts of stories. I think I even said that the children had measles and he was in quarantine. And this pair of shoes was made and I got them—then I could pay for them. I sighed a sigh of relief, and, unfortunately, the man I sold them to was so excited with them that he wrote back and ordered another shoe that I had drawn at complete random and I didn't know whether it was possible to make such a shoe. But as £20 was involved I had to do something about it.

Coutts produced shoes between 1937-39 and the enterprise provided him with a collection of fetish shoes that he used in his photography (JASC interview, p. 7). He later retained the “Achilles,” label, which appeared in *Bizarre* magazine. Although Coutts eventually saved enough money to order the printing of *Bizarre*, the enterprise closed with the beginning of World War II. He wrote that were it not for the outbreak of World War II, “*Bizarre* would have been published in Nov. '39.”⁷⁹ Coutts volunteered for military service and served as a merchant seaman during the war.

Coutts' contact with Bringman and his Australian magazine-shoemaking adventure both illustrate the centrality of *London Life* as a medium for commerce and social contact in the kinky world of the 1930's.



Figure 75: Coutts watercolor (Bélier Press)

⁷⁸ Coutts letter to Bringman, n.d., c. spring 1938 (JBR).

⁷⁹ Coutts letter to Gebhard, Nov. 9, 1960 (PHGA).

3.43 Coutts' early American period: Montreal and New York, 1945-1949.

When released from military service at the end of World War II Coutts traveled to Montreal in order to obtain a visa to enter the United States, where he intended to publish *Bizarre* magazine. *Bizarre* #2, the first published issue of *Bizarre*, was published in Montreal in January, 1946. Here Coutts was able to find a printer with paper—a commodity in short supply following World War II (JASC interview, p. 14). Subsequent issues were published in New York (Rund 1974, p. vii).⁸⁰

In the composition of *Bizarre* #2, which Coutts assembled in a Canadian motel room based on his memory of the lost proofs sent to London in 1939,⁸¹ he drew explicitly from *London Life*. Regarding the first published issue of *Bizarre*, Coutts recalled (JASC interview, p. 14; bracketed section in original):

⁸⁰ According to the current chronology, Coutts first arrived in the United States in 1946. In my research at the Northeast branch of the National Archives in New York City, I encountered an interesting case docket: C-88-5, United States of America v. John Coutts (1932). Mr. Coutts was arrested for a prohibition violation in Newburgh, New York on Feb. 25, 1932. The case was dismissed for lack of evidence.

J.B. Rund, the preeminent authority on John Coutts, believes that this is not John Alexander Scott Coutts. I have found no positive evidence that JAS Coutts was definitely elsewhere on Feb. 25, 1932, although it is known that he was generally in Australia during the 1930's. Given the fact that Coutts was a world traveler (e.g., his trip to Britain in 1936), and in the absence of positive evidence proving otherwise, I think the possibility of an early Coutts visit to the U.S. cannot be eliminated. In the JASC interview (p. 14) Coutts references "old friends down in New York" that he had in 1945—although how "old" these friends were is unclear (possibly WW II buddies). Hopefully future research will shed some light on this.



Figure 76: John Coutts, cover of *Bizarre* #2 (1946) (KIRSGR)

When I put it out the first issue was labeled No. 2, v. 2. The reason for that was that I had an idea for getting orders for another issue. I only had enough cash to put out one issue. Now I wrote in No. 2, I swiped some old letters which appeared in *London Life*, I took them as guides and knocked together a correspondence column. --rehashed [the letters] so they wouldn't be quite recognizable, and used them as the basis for the correspondence column in No. 2, and in it I wrote some myself and relied mainly on *London Life* for variety, and I spoke in glowing terms of pictures that appeared in issue No. 1, photographs in No. 1, and letters in No. 1, and I made No. 1 sound such a bloody hot number, I hoped, that everybody would write in and order it, and with that I would have sufficient money to publish the damned magazine. However, unfortunately, they did not come in as I hoped.⁸²

The first printing of approximately 5,000 issues was distributed by Coutts on consignment, and was sold at 25 cents per issue "in 2 weeks off newsstands in Montreal" (JASC interview, p. 15). *Bizarre* #3 was published later in 1946, after Coutts moved to New York City.

Throughout his publishing career the scale of Coutts' business was small. He eventually developed a mailing list of approximately 5,000 names through which he sold his work, a list affectionately referred to by Coutts as his list of "5,000 solid citizens." His products included *Bizarre* magazine, bondage and fetish photo sets, and his Gwendoline cartoon series. Coutts was never able to draw upon the resources of a major distributor. He unsuccessfully attempted to find a distributor after he arrived in

⁸¹ JASC interview, p. 8.

⁸² Later publishers would respond to the problem of how to generate a correspondence column, or personal contact ads, for the first issue of a new magazine in similar fashion: by drawing from a variety of sources and creating the material themselves. Later correspondence sections in *Bizarre* contained letters actually submitted by readers. This was not the case for many other publications in the genre (see Bienvenu 1997).

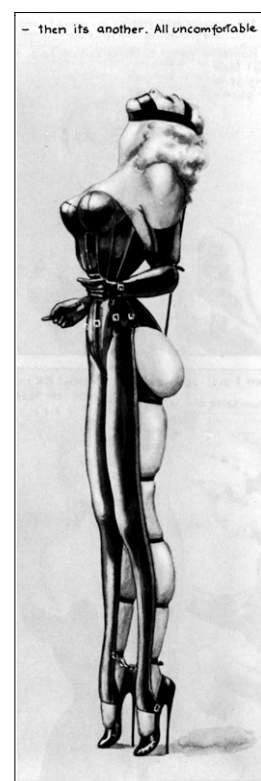


Figure 77: Coutts hard-media drawing,, from "Gwendoline and 'The Missing Princess'" c. 1950. Original series later sold to Irving Klaw (c. 1951). (Bélier Press)

New York, but was forced then and throughout his career in the United States to perform this task himself (JASC interview, p. 9):

My hopes of getting a distributor in New York -- I just couldn't get one. So I was compelled to take it to the bookstores and sell it on consignment. I did my own distribution, selling direct to bookstores. Certain bookstores would pay selling the magazine by mail order and that was exactly how this thing went. Stores were most chary about taking the magazine. At the start they didn't think it would sell. But in a very short time they were asking for more, or when was the next issue coming out, and they found it selling extremely well...

Although it limited his potential financial rewards, Coutts' autonomous mode of operation gave him complete artistic control over the content of his magazine, and probably contributed to the fact that he was unmolested by authorities until 1954.⁸³ J.B. Rund estimates that a total of approximately 10,000 - 15,000 copies of each issue of *Bizarre* were printed.⁸⁴

En route to New York from Montreal, Coutts visited John Bringman in Chicago. Although the precise sequence of connections is not clear, after arriving in New York Coutts quickly made contact with the social circle surrounding Guyette—a group that included key producers of erotica such as Robert Harrison. As mentioned above, Coutts' work was published by Harrison in 1949; in addition, photographs of Coutts himself appeared in some issues of Harrison publications in 1949. A second prominent producer met and very likely

⁸³ As I elaborate below, police harassment of erotica producers was common during this period. Coutts' first troubles with the police followed publication of *Bizarre* #1 in 1954 (JASC interview, p. 18).

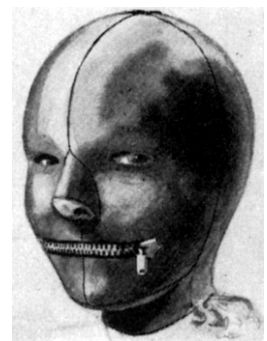


Figure 78: Coutts, early leather mask. From *Bizarre* #10, 1952 (PC)

influenced by Coutts is Irving Klaw, whom Coutts met through a mutual acquaintance in 1947. Klaw is the topic of the next section.

3.421 Coutts' links to practitioner social networks

In addition to public producers of erotica, through Bringman, Coutts came into contact with a group of private practitioners in the New York area. Among these was Greg Day,⁸⁵ a prominent member of the social circle linked to Guyette, most likely from the late 1930's. The relationship between Day and Guyette was evidently fairly close: Day owned a unique, custom-made automobile that appears in Guyette photography.⁸⁶ Day also purchased fetish costumes from Guyette, who was one of a very small number of producers of fetish clothing and paraphernalia at the time.

Day was a wealthy patron of the bizarre lifestyle, who from the late 1940's through the 1960's was himself the center of a distinct social circle of private practitioners. This private practitioner group overlapped with social circles surrounding erotica producers, including Charles Guyette and Leonard Burtman. Day hosted fetish parties at his beach house close to New York City, and his fame in the underground bizarre world was such that Kinsey researchers attempted to enlist him as a consultant, unfortunately without success.⁸⁷ Coutts was a close



DONT LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU
learn jui jitsu
and the art of self defense

Figure 79: Kinky *jui jitsu*, a British tradition appropriated by Coutts (*Bizarre* #6, 1951)

⁸⁴ Personal communication, June 22, 1997.

⁸⁵ "Greg Day" is a pseudonym.

⁸⁶ J.B. Rund personal communication, Feb. 24, 1997.

⁸⁷ Gebhard interview, 1996.

friend of Day, had a key to Day's house, and stayed as a guest at Day's home for extended periods.⁸⁸

With notable exceptions such as Coutts, who was single during his United States period, most members of the Day social circle were couples who were devotees of the bizarre. These friends would visit with Day, sometime for extended stays, and create quite elaborate festivities.

Mr. Day is deceased, but the Day social circle continues to exert influence in the SM/fetish world today. For example, a private practitioner couple who were members of the Day social circle were senior members of the network who helped to introduce Marie Constance to the "scene" in the late 1970's (Marie Constance interview, 1997). Today Ms. Constance is the proprietor of the Dressing for Pleasure Exotic Boutique, described as "the world's largest fetish department store." From 1987 to 1996 Ms. Constance organized and hosted the annual Dressing for Pleasure Erotic Ball, one of the first major public events for heterosexual SM and fetish aficionados.⁸⁹

Other private practitioner contacts of Coutts were very important in the history of the American Fetish style, as behind-the-scenes facilitators who worked with erotica producers. One prominent example is known in the lay literature by the pseudonym "Little John," so called because of his small stature.



Figure 80: Tana Louise, prominent fetish model (c. 1960). Outfits such as this were worn at Greg Day's parties in the 1950's and 60's. (GK)

⁸⁸ Coutts is featured in a home movie, which includes bondage scenes, taken at Day's home circa 1949. A copy of the film is held at KIRSGR.

⁸⁹ "Marie Constance" is the pseudonym Ms. Constance has used for many years. Dressing for Pleasure's WWW address is <http://www.dfp.com>.

John Coutts, who was 6'1", was "big John." Little John was a bondage aficionado who met Coutts via the Guyette circle. In 1947 Little John introduced Coutts to Irving Klaw, during the year that Klaw began to produce bondage, SM, and fetishistic material (JASC interview, p. 17). Coutts sold Klaw his photographic negatives, circa 1947, which contributed to the early development of the fetish and bondage component of Klaw's business.⁹⁰

Despite *Bizarre's* small distribution, through his magazine and personal contacts Coutts exerted a tremendous influence on the development of the American Fetish style. Contemporary and future producers of erotica avidly read Coutts' work, and evidence of stylistic appropriation from Coutts is replete throughout the genre. Paul Gebhard wrote to Coutts on Oct. 6, 1960 (PHGA):

You had, as you know, a profound influence on most of the magazines that followed *Bizarre*. Even many of the artists got their ideas from you--Gene Bilbrew, for instance, freely admits this. To be blunt, if you took away John Willie and Irving Klaw, you would have virtually nothing left in the United States but imitators.

As indicated above, Coutts himself was directly influenced by producers in the European fetish style, such as *London Life*, Carlo, and Diana Slip, as well as the early American social circle centered around Charles Guyette.



Figure 81: Inspiration for the Playboy bunny? Coutts drawing, from *Bizarre* #3 (1946) (PC)

⁹⁰ JASC interview, p. 17; "NYC" letter to J.B. Rund, March 1977 (JBR).



Figure 82: Ponygirls. Coutts watercolor, clearly inspired by the European Fetish style (Bélier Press)



Figure 83: Irving Klaw, c. 1955 (Essex and Swanson 1996)

3.5 Irving Klaw

Irving Klaw (1911-1966) was one of the most successful producers in the American Fetish style, and the family business he founded continues today in New York City.⁹¹ Largely because of his association with Bettie Page, a fetish model of the 1950's who in recent years has been transformed into a cult figure,⁹² Klaw is today the best known of the early SM/fetish erotica producers.⁹³ Klaw was also one of the most

⁹¹ The business Klaw founded is today called Movie Star News. It is located at 134 West 18th Street, New York City. Their WWW address is: <http://www.moviestarnews.com>

⁹² The most extensive of the recent pop culture works on Bettie Page is Essex and Swanson 1996; on Klaw see esp. p. 142-187.

⁹³ The popular history of fetish/SM erotica that emerges in the published works on Bettie Page is quite unbalanced. Irving Klaw tends to be featured as the major producer of Bettie Page SM/fetish material, but Ms. Page was extensively photographed and published by another very significant twentieth-century producer: Leonard Burtman (I address Burtman below, p. 143).

notorious and persecuted producers of this material: from the late 1940's he was under intense scrutiny by law enforcement agencies including the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the FBI; in the mid-1950's he was a subject of the Kefauver congressional investigations into juvenile delinquency and obscenity. Klaw's production in the SM/fetish genre ceased after he became embroiled in an obscenity prosecution in 1963—he suffered a guilty verdict that was later reversed at the appellate level in July, 1965.⁹⁴ He died shortly thereafter from appendicitis. In this section I introduce Klaw and discuss his entry and first years of production in the SM/fetish genre. In the next chapter I focus on legal problems experienced by Klaw from 1950-1965.

Klaw's first known occupation was as a furrier, a job he held from 1933 to 1937 (U.S. Congress, Senate. 1955a, p. 232). Around 1938 Klaw opened a "book and photo store," and soon after focused his product line on photographs.⁹⁵ Klaw's material through 1946 was principally conventional cheesecake, and did not include SM and kinky images. His products included pin-up photographs of movie stars and other performers, magazines, and pictures of cartoon characters sold to children (Price 1951). By the late 1940's Klaw also worked as a dealer who sold private collections.

Through the 1940's Klaw developed an independent distribution system that he used later as he moved into the

On the other hand, John Coutts, who is mentioned in the Essex and Swanson book cited above (p. 171), never met Bettie Page (see Coutts letter to Gebhard, March 19, 1962; PHGA).

⁹⁴ 350 F. 2d 155 (1965). See De Grazia 1969, p. 535-544.



Figure 84: Klaw hard media bondage, c. 1949 (Bélier Press)

SM/fetish market. Klaw sold his material primarily through mail-order, and also over-the-counter at his store at 212 East 14th Street in New York City.⁹⁶ Mail order was the primary sales medium.⁹⁷ He regularly mailed ephemera advertising his products, which changed in name and format over time. During the 1940's Klaw published a small magazine-format publication called *Movie Star News*. Later his primary format would be the "Irving Klaw Bulletin," which would change in title over the years. These bulletins were profusely illustrated with thumbnail photographs from photo sets, which were annotated with enigmatic series codes such as "X-800" or "OD-1." Other Klaw products such as cartoons and books were advertised in the Bulletins. In late 1949 Klaw expanded his production to include films.⁹⁸

Klaw entered the SM/fetish photograph business in 1947. Multiple sources converge on a single account of Klaw's introduction to what was to become a lucrative business. In a 1980 interview Klaw's sister Paula, who worked with Klaw as an

⁹⁵ Hamilton Communications (1976).

⁹⁶ A second address used by Klaw during the period of this dissertation was 35 Montgomery St., Jersey City, New Jersey. This was the location of Klaw's NUTRIX company, which specialized in SM and fetishistic material. NUTRIX, which I address in the next chapter, developed during the 1950's.

⁹⁷ Klaw's use of the U.S. mail was to bring him into conflict with the government agency most zealous in its persecution of erotica producers: the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. On the other hand, the fact that he did not use interstate freight shipment, a distribution mode used by major distributors, kept him largely beyond the purview of the FBI.

⁹⁸ Klaw letter to Kinsey, Dec. 8, 1949; KIRSGR.



Figure 85: Klaw, *Movie Star News* bulletin, 28th edition, 1949 (PC)

assistant and, later, a photographer, recalled how Klaw came to enter the field:⁹⁹

Q: ...how did Irving Klaw, your brother, decide that there were people who would pay for pictures which showed women who were tied up?

A: It wasn't Irving's idea to begin with, but, once it started, he recognized that there was something to it.

Q: Whose idea was it?

A: We had a customer, a very prominent businessman who came in regularly to buy movie stills, but he only wanted scenes of actresses who were tied up. He wanted them to be gagged too. Anyway, he came to Irving one day and said, "Let's hire some models and I'll do the tying and we will make pictures and I will pay for the whole thing—models, photographers, film. All I want in return is one set of pictures . . . and let me do the tying." He was quite well known in New York, and he was very wealthy.

Q: Did Irving understand what the guy's request was all about?, what was behind it?

A: He knew. Irving was a very smart man. He realized that this man and he would both profit, each in his own way. The man would derive immense pleasure from being present at these bondage sessions and Irving would acquire the pictures and negatives at no cost.

Q: When was this, 1947?

A: Right.

This account is basically repeated in Essex and Swanson (1996, p. 143-144), with the addition that the customer is identified as "Little John" (John Coutts' friend).

Once introduced to the SM/fetish market, Klaw quickly turned it into a very lucrative business. There are several features of Klaw's mode of operation that are important to note.

First, Klaw was able to produce highly marketable material at virtually no cost, which provided a tremendous incentive to move into the fetish photo business, which he pursued.



Figure 86: Irving Klaw bulletin, June 1949 (PC)

⁹⁹ Hamilton Communications (1976), p. 10-11.

Second, in the early years of Klaw's SM/fetish period, studio sessions were directed by practitioner collaborators, not Klaw. Practitioner collaborators such as "Little John" determined compositional details such as posing of the models, the use of costumes and props (which they provided), and actually placed the models in bondage. Thus, practitioner collaborators contributed skill in tying knots, the use of imaginative props and situations, and most importantly the aesthetic sensibility of the fetishist—who develops a keen sensitivity to such qualitative features as material, lines (e.g., the curve of a leg, foot, or shoe in a photograph), affect, and visual composition. This feature of the production process strongly influenced the conventions and thematic content of Klaw's material, which tended to focus on fetishistic, usually hard-media, "bizarre" bondage predicaments.

In the view of knowledgeable consultants, Klaw never developed a practitioner's aesthetic sensibility. However, in the early years the production of his material was structured in such a way that Klaw himself was required only to facilitate photo sessions by providing space, models, and photographers. Klaw did monitor production in order to ensure compliance with current obscenity standards, but within this boundary his practitioner-producer customers were largely in creative control of the material produced. Thus, Klaw managed his practitioner customers in a way that maximized both their input and his profit.



Figure 87: Klaw
bizarre bondage n.d.
(Bélier Press)

One technique used by Klaw to engage practitioners was to solicit suggestions directly from his customers. In the March 1950 issue of the *Irving Klaw Bulletin*, for example, Klaw wrote:

SPECIAL NOTICE FROM IRVING KLAU

Do you have a specially hard to find type of photo, which you would like me to pose especially for you? If so, write me giving full details, amount you can afford to pay for each special pose, and I'll see if I can have these specially posed when I make my new monthly model series.

Prices of special poses runs according to amount of time and models used.

Klaw allowed customers to share costs and attend photo sessions. He also attempted to hire photographers who were knowledgeable about fetishism. He unsuccessfully attempted to enlist the aid of John Coutts, who developed an intense dislike for Klaw. With considerable distaste, Coutts recalled an account he heard of how Klaw photo sessions operated (JASC interview, p. 41):¹⁰⁰

As a matter of fact, once Irving Klaw asked me if I would assist him in posing this model. Well, he was a very shrewd man. I turned him down because I just didn't like the man and I didn't want to be associated with him in any way. He was a very shrewd man. Anybody could write down there and say they'd like a model dressed so and so, could they pose them, and he'd say, "All right, it'll cost you so much." Well, they would get down there, and all depending on the number of guys he had, it might be 75 bucks per each, it might be only \$20.00 each. Then they could go along and they'd get 10 poses in whatever position they wanted. And from a friend of mine that was down at one of these sessions, he said, well, God almighty, it was bloody awful: A lot of these blokes down there sitting with their hands in their pockets, feeling their balls, getting an awful kick, and they'd tie this bloody girl up in some way, they hadn't tied a girl up before in their lives and didn't know what to do, no one could show them what to do, Klaw didn't know what to do, and there was



Figure 88: Klaw bondage, n.d. (Bélier Press)

¹⁰⁰ A much more positive account of the Klaw photo sessions is found in Essex and Swanson 1996, p. 143-153.

this bloody thing, so that he didn't pay his models, he got paid for his models, each of the chaps that went through this business paid so much money and in return got a number — 10 photographs I think it was — 10 8X10 photographs, he got ten of all the lot he'd done — it might have been only 5 — and then those photographs were sold through his thing. That is why Klaw has such a vast variety of photographs in all sorts and kinds of clothing, position, boots — oh, those chaps also had to produce the clothing in which they wanted the model posed. But the thing was they would stand up there in the corner and more or less jerk themselves off in their excitement while this performance was going on, and well, candidly, to me it was absolutely disgusting, the thought of the whole bloody thing. As I say, I never attended one of the sessions.¹⁰¹

After the death of Little John in the mid-1950's, Klaw and his sister Paula took over production of their material. J.B. Rund, an expert in these matters, informs me that in the estimation of practitioner-connoisseurs, material produced by the Klaw's was "not as good" (Rund interview, 1996).¹⁰²

A third feature of Klaw's operation was the acquisition of new material from external practitioner-oriented sources. Klaw purchased Coutts' photographic negatives (JASC interview, p. 17), most likely in 1947-49, and also purchased a cartoon series, *Sweet Gwendoline* in "The Escape Artiste," from Coutts in 1949. Coutts later refused offers from Klaw to continue the



Figure 89: Paula Klaw posing a model, c. 1955 (Bélier Press)

¹⁰¹ In his own business, Coutts absolutely refused to allow visitors/voyeurs to attend his photo sessions. He wrote in a mailing, "Our studio is a work shop, and never open to visitors..." (Coutts letter to his customers, August 1960 (KIRSGR vertical file: *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century)* — Coutts; John Willie)).

¹⁰² This evaluation calls out for a detailed analysis of Klaw photography from 1947 to 1963, with shifts content, composition, technique, etc. precisely noted and periodicized. Unfortunately, I have not had time to do this massive project during the dissertation research period. On this point I must rely on Rund's considerable authority.

series (Rund 1974, p. ix). The fact that Klaw made considerable money from Coutts' work, although he paid him little, contributed to Coutts' rejection of Klaw's overtures. As Coutts recalled about Klaw (JASC interview, p. 17):

Because of the way he ran it there was a stinking pile of money in it. He had his own distribution, his own mailing list, he advertised all over the place, which I couldn't do, and so the net result was that the place became flooded with his stuff and he asked me to do cartoons along a certain line [but] I simply had nothing to do with him.

Klaw purchased photographs from Guyette, who was out of the fetish photograph business by 1947.¹⁰³ Few of these photographs were advertised in Klaw ephemera, as most went clearly beyond the obscenity standards of the time. He also purchased and resold material from "amateurs," a common practice in today's erotica business—such as the photographer of his "TA" amateur bondage series.¹⁰⁴

In what is probably his most important direct contribution to the development of the American Fetish style, Klaw actively sponsored new talent. Two very prominent



Figure 90: Photo from Klaw's "TA" amateur bondage series, c. 1950. Here skill in bondage technique is evident (e.g., knot-tying). (Bélier Press)



Figure 91: Detail of TA series bondage photo (Bélier Press)

¹⁰³ Klaw letter to Gebhard, Jan 19, 1961; PHGA.

¹⁰⁴ Klaw wrote to Kinsey—with some hyperbole, perhaps to encourage a sale—that "the TA amateur series on bondage, [...] is by far, the most strenuous bondage photos ever made, far superior to those I could make here, with my models in New York, these were made by an amateur photographer, using a hometown girl-friend of his, who, enjoys being tied up and does not object to the most strenuous and exacting bondage pose. In fact, he has made many poses which would be impossible for me to duplicate, here in New York, with my models. These TA series are an excellent seller, because of the fine quality of posing and ideas, as well as the unusual poses" (Klaw letter to Kinsey, July 27, 1950; KIRSGR).

examples are the artists Gene Bilbrew (1923-1971) and Eric Stanton (b. 1926), both of whom produced a tremendous quantity of work for Klaw and later publishers, such as Leonard Burtman.¹⁰⁵ Stanton was first hired as an artist by Klaw circa 1947. Bilbrew, an African-American, met Stanton while both were students at The School of Visual Arts in New York City. Here Bilbrew studied under Burne Hogarth, creator of the famous Tarzan comic strip. It was via Stanton that Bilbrew met and came to work for Klaw in 1951. Inspired by antecedents such as Coutts and Carlo, Stanton, Bilbrew, and a number of other artists produced stylistically distinct work that contributed to the development of the American Fetish style.

Finally, Klaw was scrupulously careful about operating within the tacit boundaries for obscenity employed by law enforcement agencies. He censored his own material, and did not hesitate to order original artwork and photography altered in order to remove potentially problematic content. In these decisions Klaw was guided by business and legal concerns rather than aesthetic considerations. This occasionally brought Klaw into conflict with the artists who worked for him. For example, Stanton protested Klaw's order to draw clothing over exposed breasts and buttocks in Coutts' *Gwendoline* and "The Missing Princess" cartoon series (Rund 1974, p. ix). Klaw was unmoved



Figure 93: Stanton NUTRIX drawing, c. 1960 (PC)



Figure 92: Bilbrew NUTRIX drawing, c. 1960 (PC)

¹⁰⁵ Information on Stanton and Bilbrew presented above is drawn from J.B. Rund's historical introductions to his *Bizarre Comix* series, no.'s 1 (1975), 2 (1975), 3 (1976).

by arguments citing the artistic value of the work, and the original drawings were defaced.

Such practices did not prevent early attention to Klaw's business, but delayed sustained persecution until 1950, three years after he entered the fetish/SM market. I address Klaw's legal problems in the next chapter.

3.6 Social-organizational features of the American Fetish style.

Drawing from the preceding discussion, in this section I profile social-organizational features of the American Fetish style to 1949. I organize the discussion by categories defined in the basic model for the production of SM styles (p. 29 above). These features will be further elaborated and compared in chapters 4-6 for both the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles.

3.61 Informal Social Networks and Formal Organizations: Social circles initially centered around erotica producers

By 1949 the social-organizational foundation of the American Fetish style had been established, although the “bizarre world” associated with the heterosexual American Fetish style that would mature during the 1950’s and early 1960’s was still in its infancy.¹⁰⁶ The descriptive historical account above highlights a structure that is very similar to Crane’s (1987) account of the social networks surrounding the development of styles in avant-garde art. The key social organizational form in both is the *social circle*. Kadushin (1976) provides the classic profile of a social circle:¹⁰⁷

- *No clear boundaries.* Members of a social circle see only their immediate contacts, and typically do not accurately perceive the entire circle.
- *Indirect interaction.* Individual members of the circle do not know all other members.
- *Core of greater density and no formal leadership.*

¹⁰⁶ As I describe in the next chapter, the later Gay Leather style exhibited a different configuration of relevant networks and organizational contexts.

¹⁰⁷ Kadushin 1976, p. 108-100; the summary below combines quotations and paraphrases of the original.

- *Lack of instituted structures and norms.* Social circle structures are “emergent” and “arise to solve the problems of individual members who relate to one another because they have certain common interests and needs.”
- *Invisible in their totality.*
- *Always linked to some more formal structure .*
- *Characteristic of an external economy industry.* Production depends on outside entities.

Each of these ideal type criteria applies to some degree in the case of the early American Fetish style, but of particular importance is the organizational mooring of the social network. Kadushin writes that social circles (1976, p. 107-108):

...are always “pegged to” or “draped around” other structures. That is, the lines of influence or interaction tend to follow other more formal relations, whether it be common occupational status or some relationship to a formal group, a gallery, or even a bar or cafe.

In avant-garde art, art galleries served as a key “formal structure” that served as a center of artist social circles (Crane 1987, p. 30). In the case of the American Fetish style, erotica producers served as the initial organizational mooring for practitioner-producer social circles.

To a large degree by default, Charles Guyette was situated as a hub of early heterosexual SM/fetish social networks in the United States.¹⁰⁸ Through his business Guyette came to be linked to a variety of small groups of practitioners and aficionados. This included John Bringman in Chicago, Greg Day in New York, and, indirectly during the 1930’s, John Coutts. This configuration is not at all surprising: in their search for erotica, equipment, and kindred spirits, individuals with an interest in fetishistic materials or SM would

¹⁰⁸ For example, Guyette’s contacts allowed him to arrange private encounters among practitioners. Coutts cites an instance where Guyette arranged for a man, at the man’s request, to be placed in bondage and tortured for four consecutive days by two women (JASC interview, p. 36-37).

tend to find public producers of such material, such as Guyette.

Later, independent practitioner social circles formed around resourceful patrons such as Greg Day, who provided contacts and facilities for erotic play. As mentioned above, Day was linked to Guyette through Guyette's fetish costume business. There is no doubt that Coutts met Day through individuals linked to Guyette, probably John Bringman. Day's social circle would later overlap with other social circles that developed around American Fetish erotica producers during the 1950's and 60's.

Irving Klaw, however, was in a different category. Unlike major producers Charles Guyette, John Coutts, and later Leonard Burtman, Klaw was never socially involved in practitioner networks, and never the center of a practitioner-producer social circle. His extensive contacts with artists and customers who were themselves members of practitioner social circles, such as John Coutts, were always business relationships. In fact, Klaw actively sought to prevent contacts between artists who worked for him (Rund 1976b)—perhaps fearing that communication between them might cost him money if they compared wages.

3.62 The Legal Environment: early constraints.

I focus on the legal environment in the first section of the next chapter, but at this point its early impact on the development of the American Fetish style can be noted. In the case of Charles Guyette, a year in prison from August, 1935 to August, 1936 did not bring his activities to a close. However, in terms of advertising and public visibility, he clearly changed his mode of operation following release. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Guyette photography is not precisely dated, so the content of his photography before and after his release cannot be systematically compared. It is possible that Guyette's

material was equally or more explicit after 1936, but underground rather than public.

Klaw actively censored his products in the late 1940's in order to avoid possible obscenity charges, although he experienced no significant legal problems. In Klaw's case, the perceived legal environment clearly impacted the context of production and affected the content of the "Klaw" products. Coutts' material was more explicit than Klaw's, in terms of nudity and other period legal flashpoints, but he experienced no legal problems during this period. It is likely that the small size of his operation helped to keep Coutts below the threshold of police attention.

3.63 Distribution Systems and Technology

Erotica producers in the American Fetish style through 1949 were all independent businessmen who managed their own distribution, although not always by choice as in the case of Coutts. Mail order and over the counter sales were used by Guyette and Klaw; mail order and sales on consignment by Coutts. Klaw extensively advertised during this period in periodicals such as the Harrison cheesecake magazines, which secured him both greater business success and closer scrutiny by law enforcement agencies.

During this period production of fetishistic materials, such as leather clothing and fetishistic shoes, was a task performed by skilled craftsmen. These craftsmen were an important part of the "external economy" that supplied paraphernalia to the bizarre world. Specialized leather goods were custom ordered and relatively expensive, as illustrated by Coutts' experience in the fetish footwear business. There was no mass production nor mass market for fetishistic goods during this period (Klein interview, 1996a). I return to this topic below.

3.64 Aesthetics: Erotica Producers and Pornographers

As in more conventional art worlds, in the world of sexually oriented literature and photography there is a distinction between creative innovators and followers in a genre. Some historical producers in SM styles, like avant-garde artists, were concerned about issues of aesthetics, composition, statement, and style. John Coutts is perhaps the most prominent example of an erotica producer who was also an artist and creative innovator. Among other accomplishments, Coutts was the writer/artist/photographer/publisher of the first explicitly kink and fetish oriented magazine in the United States. Coutts was clearly engaged in a commercial enterprise, but his approach and concerns were very different from producers like Irving Klaw. Most prominently, practitioner-producers such as Coutts were motivated by more than economic rewards; their work reflects an engagement of artistic precedents, concern about aesthetic issues, and a sophistication in presentation that is typically absent from purely commercial producers. Practitioner-producers also derived sexual gratification from their work.

The Klaw case suggests a distinction between categories of producers. An analogous distinction is developed in Crane, and has important implications for the analysis of the origin of aesthetic innovations in SM style. As noted above, Crane distinguishes between artists working within avant-garde styles, who are centrally concerned about aesthetic issues, and producers of “tourist art” who produce art to sell. “Tourist art” is generally produced in accordance with existing conventions, without concern for aesthetic innovation.

Irving Klaw was indeed a “shrewd man” in that he not only reduced his financial cost and risk by linking his interests with his practitioner customers, he also created a situation where his practitioner customers produced material

for him. When his key practitioner contact, Little John, died in the mid-1950's, Klaw and his sister applied conventions learned from observation and interaction with practitioners, and pressed on to create new material.¹⁰⁹ However, as noted above, from a practitioner perspective these products were qualitatively inferior. In Crane's terms, Klaw's mode of operation after the death of Little John became similar to that of a tourist artist, who applies existing conventions to produce works for sale.

The picture that emerges of Klaw from various sources is of a gifted businessman who was very knowledgeable about the market in which he operated. There is no doubt that Klaw was an innovator as a *publisher* of fetishistic material: his success in building one of the most remarkable fetish businesses of the twentieth-century speaks for itself. However, it is equally clear that Klaw was not an artist who himself contributed to creative change in the genre, or who was concerned about aesthetic subtleties. Stylistically original "Klaw" work was done by others who worked for him. Klaw impacted SM style as a mediator, who both enabled and constrained the production of new material. The quality or novelty of material produced was of interest to the degree that it affected that marketability and legal status of his products.

There are many later examples of producers of SM/fetish erotica who entered the business purely as a business, without particular concern for the aesthetic value of the material they produced. To engage this feature of the SM/fetish world, I make a distinction between *producers of erotica*, who are concerned with issues of aesthetics, and *pornographers*. Pornographers tend to appropriate existing stylistic conventions, endlessly repeating an established

¹⁰⁹ Hamilton Communications 1976, p. 14; Essex and Swanson 1996, p. 143-144. While Klaw and his sister took over production of photography after the death of Little John, they continued to purchase material, e.g. artwork, from outside sources.

repertoire of topics, poses, stories, settings, etc.. Being for the most part rational businessmen content to harvest a sure thing—recognizing that even junk erotica sells—pornographers display little propensity toward aesthetic or stylistic innovation. In this sense Irving Klaw was the first pornographer of the American Fetish Style.

This distinction strictly addresses issues of aesthetics and the development of stylistic innovations, and is *not* an indication of the relative significance in the history of the genre. Many “imitators” performed very important roles in the cultural promulgation of SM style—for example, the fetishistic cheesecake material produced under the supervision of Edythe Farrell was broadly distributed; within the subcultural SM/fetish world, Klaw’s materials were distributed far more widely than products of Charles Guyette or John Coutts. Also, it was the “imitators” who largely found themselves setting major legal precedents, as later legal cases made their way to the United States Supreme Court.

3.641 Social networks and the transmission of style

In the case of the American Fetish style, producers who were aesthetic innovators were socially linked to each other as well as to producers in the European fetish style. Here there is an interesting parallel between Crane’s analysis of the development of an independent avant-garde in the United States and the development of the American Fetish style. Crane points out that prior to the development of New York based Abstract Expressionism, the United States had never been a leader in a major artistic movement. Direct contacts in the 1940’s with members of European traditions, particularly Surrealism and Cubism, led to the genesis of American Abstract Expressionism. Crane writes (p. 45):

That the Abstract Expressionists were able to synthesize the major trends in twentieth-century European painting was due to a remarkable coincidence of historical and social factors that brought American painters into direct contact with representatives of these European traditions. In other words, the Abstract Expressionist movement was made possible by the fact that the existing European art tradition was for the first time transmitted to American artists in America on a personal basis at a moment when these artists themselves had finally developed an artistic community in which ideas could be exchanged, evaluated, and reconceptualized.

The beginning of American social networks associated with the American Fetish style followed virtually the same pattern. At the time that Charles Guyette was initially contacted by German producers he was already established as a producer of burlesque paraphernalia—a business with many areas of overlap with bizarre fetish paraphernalia. No doubt, this is the reason that Guyette was contacted in the first place. In collaboration with his German and American associates, Guyette built upon his existing business and quickly established himself as the center of the American Fetish style of the 1930's and early 1940's.

Chapter Four: The Production of the Bizarre World, 1950-1971

4.1 Introduction

Bizarre matured as a subcultural phenomenon in the United States during the 1950's and 1960's, as social networks and erotica producers in the American Fetish style expanded. In this chapter I focus on the development of producers and subcultural networks in the American Fetish style between 1950 and 1971. I emphasize structural changes in the economic and legal environment that affected the conventions and cultural distribution of the style. In chapter five I address additional developments, particularly changes in technology and fashion, that facilitated the popularization of the style in mainstream culture (see page 263 below).

The structure of this chapter is as follows: in section 4.2 I provide a detailed review of the legal environment facing erotica producers in the American Fetish style during the 1950's and 1960's. I identify key structural constraints and later changes that tremendously expanded the range of permissible erotic representations by the mid-1960's. In section 4.3 I return to the historical profile of erotica producers and associated social networks in the American Fetish style. In the context of these social networks the “bizarre” world of the 1950's and 1960's matured—this loose and informal network of producers and practitioners is the direct antecedent of today's organized heterosexual SM/fetish subcultures. New and significant producers emerged during the 1950's that elaborated the conventions of the style; the most prominent example is Leonard Burtman and his associates. As I illustrate below, during this period the American Fetish style developed in directions that more clearly distinguished it from the European Fetish style.



Figure 94: Postmark used during the administration of Arthur Summerfield, Postmaster General from 1953 to 1961 (KIRSGR vertical file)

4.2 The Legal Environment: Structural conditions and changes

As illustrated in the previous chapter, erotica producers and their businesses played a central role in the early development of the American Fetish style. Among the structural conditions and changes that affected the development and later popularization of the American Fetish style, the legal environment was perhaps the most important. The conventions of the American Fetish style through the 1960's clearly reflected constraints imposed by a complex array of social control agencies, both governmental and extra-governmental, that were involved in anti-obscenity actions. This environment radically changed during the 1960's, a period when materials that only a few short years before had been persecuted as obscene entered mainstream culture and fashion. In this section I review key laws, judicial rulings, police agencies and enforcement practices, and morality organizations that had a direct impact on the business of erotica production in the America Fetish style. In subsequent sections of this chapter this information provides necessary context for understanding specific legal problems and stylistic constraints experienced by American Fetish producers such as Irving Klaw, John Coutts, and others.

Beginning with Irving Klaw in 1950, the second generation of producers in the American Fetish style came under intense and sustained scrutiny by law enforcement agencies and morality organizations. Anti-obscenity groups involved in actions directed against erotica producers included federal, state, and local level law-enforcement agencies, congressional investigative committees, state legislatures, and religious anti-obscenity organizations. The activities of these groups were eventually constrained by a series of judicial decisions that required administrative due process and narrowed the criteria for obscenity. These structural changes in the legal environment developed primarily between 1957 and 1966, and contributed to unprecedented explicitness in mass marketed erotic representations. This attenuation of legal restrictions on representations with SM and fetishistic connotations was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the later popularization of the American (and European) fetish style.

4.21 A Brief Sketch of Relevant Obscenity Law

The history of federal obscenity law in the United States dates from the Tariff Act of 1842, which prohibited the import of obscene “prints” and “pictures.”¹¹⁰ Although explicitly addressed in statute, obscenity was not a significant area of federal regulation until 1873. During that year Anthony Comstock, later leader of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, successfully lobbied Congress to pass an omnibus anti-obscenity act (Paul and

¹¹⁰ Prior to 1842 obscenity, if addressed at all, was regulated at the state level. At this level American obscenity law dates to the colonial period; for example, Robertus (1974, p. 17) cites a 1712 Massachusetts law that prohibited publication of “any filthy, obscene, or profane song, pamphlet, libel or mock sermon.” The first known prosecution for obscene literature in the U.S. was in 1821, when Massachusetts prosecuted the book *Fanny Hill* (Robertus 1974, p. 18). *Fanny Hill* was eventually vindicated by the U.S. Supreme Court—in 1966.

Schwartz 1957). This piece of legislation, the so-called “Comstock Act,” expanded the scope and penalties contained in the existing federal obscenity statute, and remains a foundation of federal obscenity law today.

The key statutes underlying twentieth-century obscenity prosecutions are 18 U.S.C. section 1461, which prohibits the transmission of obscene material in the mail,¹¹¹ and 18 U.S.C. section 1462, which prohibits the transport of obscene material in interstate commerce. 18 U.S.C. section 1461 is reprinted in full on the next page. Sections 1463 to 1465 of the United States Code also address obscenity, but sections 1461 and 1462 were the federal statutes most commonly applied in actions against erotica producers discussed here. The nomenclature of state law varied from state to state, but similar statutes applied.

Through the period addressed in this dissertation obscenity statutes were subject to wide variations in interpretation and enforcement. One reason for this is the vagueness of the law: twentieth-century statutory descriptions of obscenity tend to be strings of synonyms such as “obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent, or disgusting.”¹¹² Typically, none of these terms is defined in language contained in the statute. In practice, the guidelines for enforcing obscenity law have been generated in the courts. These guidelines were both formal, as articulated in court decisions, and tacit—i.e. unwritten criteria employed by judges that were understood by investigative agencies and prosecutors who prepared and presented cases.

¹¹¹ The full text of the statute, antiquated although still formally part of the U.S. code, is quoted below. Today, the term “indecent” is interpreted as “matter of a character tending to incite arson, murder, or assassination” (U.S. Postal Inspection Service WWW page). The anti-conception and anti-abortion provisions are no longer enforced.

¹¹² This particular string was found in the New York State Criminal Code, § 22a “Obscene Prints and Articles.”

Full text of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1461 (1997).
Mailing obscene or crime-inciting matter

Every obscene, lewd, lascivious, indecent, filthy or vile article, matter, thing, device, or substance; and

Every article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral use; and

Every article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing which is advertised or described in a manner calculated to lead another to use or apply it for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral purpose; and

Every written or printed card, letter, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement, or notice of any kind giving information, directly or indirectly, where, or how, or from whom, or by what means any of such mentioned matters, articles, or things may be obtained or made, or where or by whom any act or operation of any kind for the procuring or producing of abortion will be done or performed, or how or by what means abortion may be produced, whether sealed or unsealed; and

Every paper, writing, advertisement, or representation that any article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing may, or can, be used or applied for producing abortion, or for any indecent or immoral purpose; and

Every description calculated to induce or incite a person to so use or apply any such article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing -

Is declared to be nonmailable matter and shall not be conveyed in the mails or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier.

Whoever knowingly uses the mails for the mailing, carriage in the mails, or delivery of anything declared by this section or section 3001(e) of title 39 to be nonmailable, or knowingly causes to be delivered by mail according to the direction thereon, or at the place at which it is directed to be delivered by the person to whom it is addressed, or knowingly takes any such thing from the mails for the purpose of circulating or disposing thereof, or of aiding in the circulation or disposition thereof, shall be fined not more than \$5,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both, for the first such offense, and shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both, for each such offense thereafter.

The operational definition of obscenity used in most American courts from 1879 to 1957 was derived from an 1868 English case, *Regina v. Hicklin*. The “Hicklin” test defined obscenity in the following passage (Bender 1971, p. 7):

...I think the test of obscenity is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.

The Hicklin test was established in American law in the 1879 case of *U.S. v. Bennett*,¹¹³ in which jurors were instructed to evaluate isolated passages of an allegedly obscene book. They were to “...find them obscene if they ‘tend’ to ‘deprave the minds of those open to such influences,’ if they would ‘suggest impure and libidinous thoughts in the minds of the young and inexperienced’” (Paul and Schwartz 1961, p. 26). These murky criteria criminalized the “tendency to suggest impure thought” (Bender 1971, p. 9); i.e., sexually-oriented material that seemed to affront prevailing moral values was legally actionable.

In the case of *Samuel Roth v. United States* (354 U.S. 476), decided in 1957, the Supreme Court eliminated components of the Hicklin standard and began a chain of decisions that decisively narrowed the legal definition of obscenity. Roth reformulated the impure thought criterion in terms of a “prurient interest” test (Bender 1971, p. 11):

Obscene material is material which deals with sex in a manner appealing to prurient interest. I.e., material having a tendency to excite lustful thoughts. [The second sentence of this quotation appears in the opinion as a footnote to the first sentence.]

The prurient interest criterion was a change in terminology rather than spirit from Hicklin. In Roth, however, two criteria of the Hicklin standard were rejected. First, Roth shifted the standard from the most susceptible (e.g., children) to the average person. If for “the average person, applying contemporary standards, the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest,” then it is obscene (Bender 1971, p. 11). Second, Roth stipulated that the work as a whole, rather than isolated passages, must be taken into consideration in questions of obscenity.

¹¹³ 24 Fed. Cas. 1093 (S.D. N.Y., 1879); cf. Robertus 1974, p. 31; Paul and Schwartz 1961, p. 25-27.

The Roth decision did not represent a radical departure from the Hicklin standard, but it did narrow the criteria under which material could be prosecuted as obscene. Subsequent decisions continued this trend. The 1962 decision of *Manual Enterprises v. Day* added the criterion of “patent offensiveness” to the “prurient interest” test. *Both* were required in a new two-criteria test of obscenity. Patently offensive material was defined as works “...deemed so offensive on their face as to affront current community standards of decency” (Friedman 1970, p. 142). *MANual* was a homoerotic physique magazine suppressed by the Post Office under U.S.C. 18 § 1461, and under this two-part test was found to be not obscene. This was a decisive ruling *against* censorship, and contributed to a proliferation of new homoerotic publications, including those by producers in the Gay Leather style, with far more explicit representations. This included full frontal male nudity with “deliberate erotic overtones” by 1965 (Hooven 1995, p. 122; see also Waugh 1996, p. 251-253).

In the 1966 decision of *A Book Named “John Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure” v. Massachusetts*, also known as the “Fanny Hill” decision, the U.S. Supreme Court articulated a three-part test that significantly changed the legal landscape in regard to obscenity. The court ruled that, fully elaborated, the Roth criteria contained three elements. The court wrote (Friedman 1970, p. 275):

...three elements must coalesce: it must be established that (a) the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex; (b) the material is patently offensive because it affronts contemporary community standards relating to the description or representation of sexual matters; and (c) the material is utterly without redeeming social value.

The book *Fanny Hill*, originally published in 1749, was found to have “a modicum of literary and historical value.” It thus could not be considered obscene, and the publisher’s conviction was reversed.

The Fanny Hill decision was accompanied by two additional rulings, both sustaining obscenity convictions against publishers of pornography,¹¹⁴ but nevertheless from this point convictions on charges of obscenity became much more difficult for law enforcement agencies. Although changes had been underway for several years, in the aftermath of the 1966 decisions, law enforcement agencies revised internal policies regarding obscenity investigations. For example, the U.S. Post Office, the federal agency most directly involved in obscenity investigations, narrowed its investigative focus to large-scale commercial distributors. In various internal publications this change was explicitly linked to the recent Supreme Court decisions.¹¹⁵

The effect of these law enforcement changes was an immediate and dramatic alteration of the legal environment—a key component of the structural conditions faced by erotica producers. Following the 1966 decisions, from fiscal year 1967 to 1969 obscenity arrests and convictions sharply dropped (see Figure 95, page 129 below). During the same period the quantity and explicitness of erotica tremendously increased.¹¹⁶ Herbert Monte-Levy, an attorney specializing in first amendment issues, noted in a 1967 letter to Paul Gebhard:¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ The other two cases decided with Fanny Hill were *Edward Mishkin v. State of New York* (383 U.S. 502) and *Ralph Ginzberg v. United States* (383 U.S. 463). Both convictions were affirmed. Mishkin was a notorious professional pornographer who published a number of sadomasochistic works. Ginzberg produced a sophisticated publication entitled *Eros*, but engaged in such brazen publicity and marketing practices that the court affirmed his conviction on the basis of “pandering” (cf. Kuh 1967, p. 73-83; De Grazia 1969, p. 560-565).

¹¹⁵ See, for example, *Confidential Instructions for Postal Inspectors* ([1961] 1972), p. 2-4. Located at NARA Record Group 28 (Post Office); location: 14E3, 8:5-6, box 8-9. This publication is hereafter listed in references and the bibliography as U.S. Post Office, Chief Postal Inspector ([1961] 1972).

¹¹⁶ See U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, vol. 3, *The Marketplace: The Industry* (1971), p. 99-101.

¹¹⁷ Monte-Levy letter to Gebhard, September 29, 1967; PHGA. Monte-Levy kept the Institute for Sex Research posted on current developments in New

I thought you would be interested in the present obscenity situation in New York. Frankly, I am most amazed.

As a result of the Supreme Court decisions last term, apparently everyone thinks that the sky's the limit, and that there's no sky. Almost everything -- except actual intercourse pictures -- seems to be presently available.

There were many other obscenity cases, including those at the U.S. Supreme Court level, during the period from 1930 to 1971. However, the decisions addressed above were the most important in defining and then narrowing the judicial criteria for obscenity, which resulted in concrete changes in law enforcement practices. As we will see below, the more permissive structural conditions faced by producers of erotic representations during the 1960's had important effects on the promulgation of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles.

Preceding the more permissive environment of the 1960's was a period of relative repression. In the next section I focus on tactics and procedures used by the key agency involved in mid-twentieth century anti-obscenity actions: the U.S. Post Office.¹¹⁸

York obscenity law and police actions. Monte-Levy, who was directly involved in numerous mid-century obscenity cases, was (and remains today) an astute commentator on such matters.

For future scholars: Gebhard and Monte-Levy exchanged 65 letters between January 1960 and September 1976, currently located in PHGA. See also my interviews with Mr. Levy, which will eventually be available at KIRSGR.

¹¹⁸ On the general history of censorship, including that of the U.S. Post Office, see Boyer 1968; Gardiner 1958; Kuh 1967; Paul and Schwartz 1957, 1961; Roberts 1966 (a popular but nicely done report); Robertus 1974.

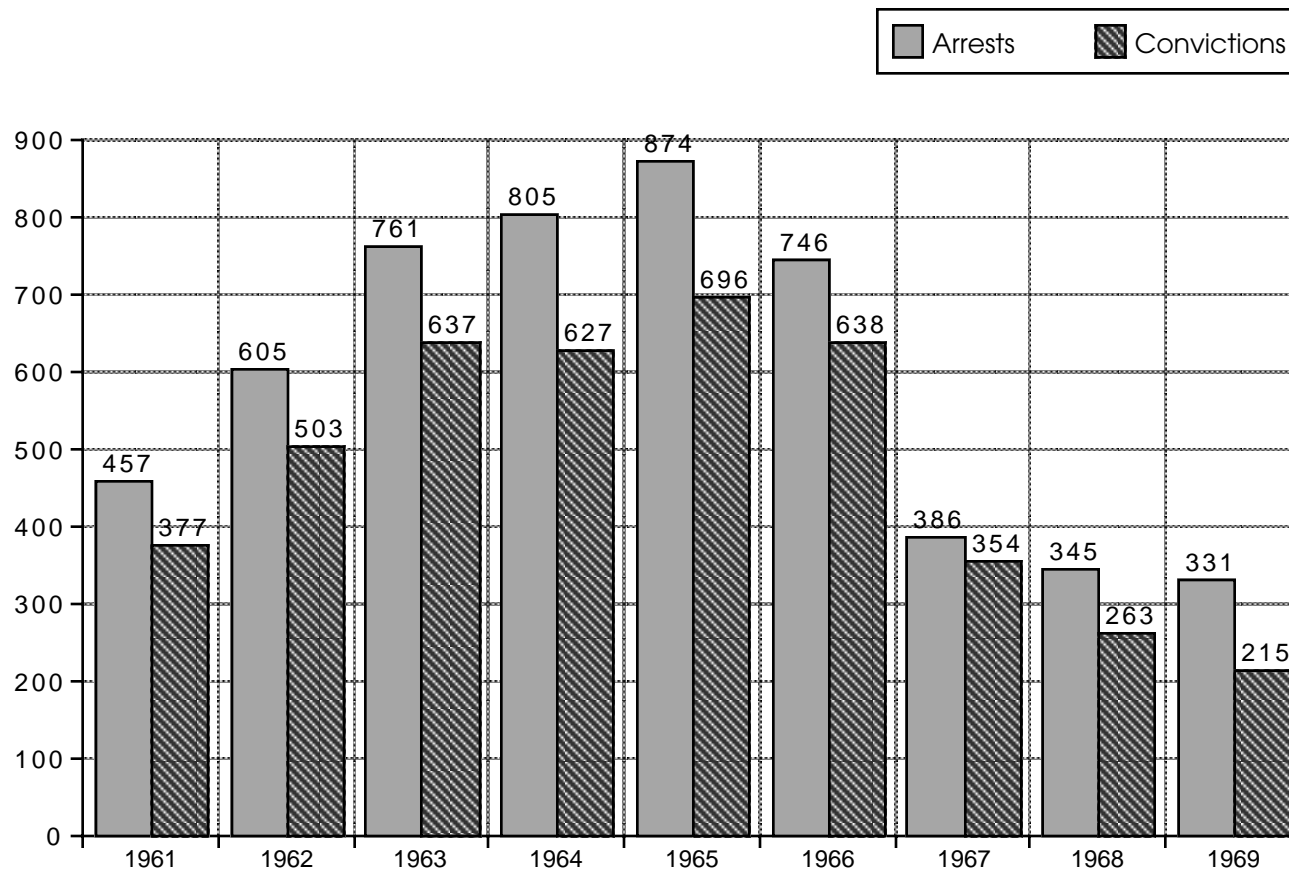


Figure 95: U.S. Post Office Obscenity Investigations, FY 1961-1969 (1969 data are for an eleven month period). Note the drop in activity beginning in 1966, the year of the U.S. Supreme Court “Fanny Hill” decision.

Source: U.S. Post Office Corporate Information Service, “Obscenity File” (L’Enfant Plaza, Washington, D.C.)

4.22 The U.S. Post Office

The United States Post Office Department (hereafter Post Office) was the preeminent censorship agency of the U.S. government during the twentieth century, and the government agency most actively involved in actions against erotica producers in the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles. Although it has received little attention in the sexuality literature, the Post Office during the mid-twentieth century was also the proponent of a campaign of moral and sexual policing linked to obscenity. Through the 1960's, the Post Office aggressively targeted consumers of erotica and sexual minorities such as homosexuals and sadomasochists. In this section I briefly outline the role of and tactics used by the Post Office in anti-obscenity actions in the mid-twentieth century.

In terms of the production of culture framework, the U.S. Post Office enters into this analysis because of the central role it plays as a distribution system. As pointed out by Becker, distribution systems have a strong influence on the content of artistic products—which tend to conform to constraints found in existing distribution channels (Becker 1982, p. 93-95). This relationship is clear in the case of the American Fetish style, where erotica producers played a central role in the development of the style. Businesses such as those of Guyette, Coutts, and Klaw used the U.S. mail as the primary distribution system for their merchandise, and in fact were economically dependent upon the mail. Their business practices and the content of their products reflected constraints imposed by the Post Office.

Unfortunately for these producers, the Post Office was the government agency that was most zealous in its persecution of “smut.” During the period

addressed in this dissertation, the Post Office engaged in an independent campaign of censorship and moral policing. The Post Office developed and employed unique censorship tactics, it generated publicity directed against producers and consumers of erotica, and engaged in a program of outreach to civil organizations sympathetic to anti-obscenity actions, such as church and women's groups.

Arthur Summerfield, Postmaster General during the Eisenhower Administration from 1953 to 1961, was a particularly vigorous opponent of "smut." Summerfield mobilized the Post Office and public in a government sponsored anti-obscenity campaign that continued throughout his administration.¹¹⁹ In numerous press releases and speeches before civic organizations, Summerfield emphasized the dire moral consequences of smut.¹²⁰ In addition to his own efforts, Summerfield appointed a special staff of "three Republican women" to deliver this message to various community groups. These spokeswomen, such as "Mrs. Richard A. Simpson," traveled to civil groups armed with "actual samples of obscene materials."¹²¹ Evidently,

¹¹⁹ Many of these activities, including full texts of speeches, are documented in official Post Office press releases. A complete set of these press releases is available in bound volumes at the U.S. Post Office Library (USPOL), L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, DC.

¹²⁰ Examples include "Obscenity in the Mails: How You Can Stop It" speech presented by Summerfield before the Women's City Club of Cleveland on October 8, 1959, reprinted in Post Office Dept. Information Service Release #260 (October 8, 1959); "Our Challenge: Decency and Dignity for Our Children," speech presented to the second national conference of the Citizens for Decent Literature by Postmaster General Summerfield, reprinted in Post Office Dept. Information Service Release #55 (February 27, 1960); "Misuse of the mails in the sale of obscenity," speech given by Chief Postal Inspector David Stephens before the "Conference of women leaders of civic, educational, parent and religious organizations and women members of the Congress and government agencies, Washington, DC, May 12, 1959," text reprinted in Post Office Department Information Service Release #121 (May 12, 1959). (USPOL).

¹²¹ Post Office Department Information Service Release #89, March 27, 1960 (USPOL).

these presentations were well attended.¹²² In one of the most remarkable features of the Summerfield-era anti-obscenity campaign, representative samples of smut confiscated by the Post Office were put on display in a pornography museum founded by Summerfield and operated by the U.S. Post Office Department. These programs were discontinued by Summerfield's Kennedy-administration successor, J. Edward Day. In 1961, Day, stressing a move away from "press agency," fired the three Republican traveling spokeswomen and eliminated the Post Office pornography museum.¹²³ Day also did away with Summerfield's "Report Obscene Mail to Your Local Postmaster" postmark, seen on page 121 above. Although Postmaster General Day was far from soft on smut, such developments reflected a general trend away from anti-obscenity zealotry. This trend accelerated in the mid-1960's.

4.221 The U.S. Postal Inspection Service

Organic to the Post Office is a federal law-enforcement agency, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (cf. Mankris 1959). The Postal Inspection Service is charged with enforcement of mail obscenity statutes, including U.S.C. title 18, § 1461 (cited above). During the mid-century period this charge was broadly interpreted: vigorous moral policing under the guise of anti-obscenity law enforcement was an established Postal Inspection Service priority from the 1940's, and was explicitly perceived to be a mission of the Postal Inspection Service through the 1960's. To illustrate: Chief Postal Inspector Henry

¹²² This traveling pornography show was lampooned by civil libertarian organizations, who cited Postmaster Summerfield as the "hero" of, among others, "the thousands of middle-aged club women whose most exciting recent experience has been viewing the Post Office Department's traveling obscenity circus" (Flyer from the League for the Abolition of Postal Censorship (1960), KIRSGR vertical file: *Censorship Cases, Post Office*).

Montague, who headed the agency during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, told an interviewer in 1969 that the Postal Inspection Service (Friedman 1971, p. 16):

has a duty to inform appropriate persons whenever it observes mail being delivered to a pornography dealer from a “teacher, or scoutmaster, or anyone in a similarly sensitive position.”

This perception of “duty,” which resonated with anti-smut tasking of Postmaster Generals such as Summerfield, contributed to a legal environment in which Postal Inspectors were perhaps the nation’s preeminent moral policemen. In what is to the best of my knowledge an untold tale of government oppression, Postal Inspectors aggressively sought out and persecuted erotica producers and sexual minorities who used the U.S. mail.¹²⁴ Their activities are documented in contemporary Postal Inspection Service publications such as the *Inspection Service Bulletin*, which is filled with proud accounts of how homosexuals and other moral “perverts” had been discovered through their use of the mail, and subsequently publicly exposed and prosecuted.¹²⁵ Given the

¹²³ “Post Office Acts to Trim ‘Frills,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1961.

¹²⁴ Some of these moral policemen earned fame, such as Inspector Harry Simon, who specialized in obscenity and was a ubiquitous figure in mid-twentieth century anti-obscenity law enforcement. Inspector Simon supervised thousands of obscenity investigations, and was a frequent expert witness before congressional committees. He was professionally acquainted with many erotica producers discussed here.

¹²⁵ An uncounted number of lives were destroyed by such actions. To provide one example, from the March 1961 issue of the *Postal Inspection Bulletin*: “One of the most important investigations of obscenity relates to a purported pen pal club in Chicago, Illinois, but revealed to be a clearing house for written communication between homosexuals. Of 750 men involved about 500 appeared actively enrolled. A 1960 yearbook could be obtained for \$20 listing names, addresses and occupation of members, including professional men, teachers, students, clergy, government employees and others residing in 24 states. In addition to some individual prosecutive action, of 88 men named in indictment at Chicago, 52 will be prosecuted for using the mails to exchange obscene correspondence and pictures, and sometimes arranging personal meetings.” (Source: NARA Record Group 28 (USPO), 14E3, 8:5-6, Box 12.) This investigation was the topic of USPO Information Service Press Release #

economics of erotica publishing, which mandated use of the mail as a distribution system, and the moralistic climate of the 1950's and early 1960's law enforcement, it was inevitable that producers in the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles came to the attention of Postal Inspectors.

4.222 Administrative sanctions employed by the U.S. Post Office

Most actions taken by the Post Office against producers of erotica were administrative sanctions rather than criminal prosecutions. In practical terms (from the perspective of the Post Office), administrative sanctions were a far more expeditious and efficient means by which to attack obscenity than criminal proceedings—which are under the control of the Department of Justice.¹²⁶ Administrative sanctions were handled internally, bypassed cumbersome due process requirements found in the criminal justice system, and employed different standards—more strict and typically more arbitrary—than those used in the Department of Justice for criminal investigations. Although the sanctions discussed below were authorized in statute, the Post Office's methods of employing these sanctions in obscenity cases were eventually found to be illegal or unconstitutional in the federal courts. The Post Office gradually shifted to criminal proceedings rather than administrative sanctions as a means of enforcing obscenity law.



Figure 96: Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield (PC)

G-2, January 16, 1961, in which Postmaster General Summerfield praised the prosecuting U.S. Attorney in Chicago “for his strong stand in this case and others dealing with homosexuality.”

¹²⁶ In criminal cases, the Postal Inspection Service's investigative procedure is to gather all evidence concerning an alleged violation and present this evidence to a U.S. Attorney. The U.S. Attorney determines whether or not to proceed with formal prosecution.

Before reviewing specific censorship tactics used by the Post Office, it is important to review two key classes of U.S. mail. Since 1872, the Post Office has defined a special category of postage called “second-class mail.”¹²⁷ This is a heavily subsidized rate used primarily by periodicals, and is the least expensive means for publishers to distribute magazines. Businesses must submit a special application for a second-class mailing permit, and this permission is subject to review, approval (or denial), and revocation. Erotica producers whose businesses were linked to second-class mail—such as Irving Klaw, who advertised in publications such as the Harrison cheesecake magazines that were dependent upon second-class postage—were vulnerable to pressures applied by the Post Office.

In contrast, first-class mail is the most expensive class of postage. First-class mail is not economically viable for most producers who distribute materials in large mailings. However, first-class mail enjoys special privacy protection under federal law. Unlike other categories of postage, first-class mail cannot be opened by postal officials without a search warrant. Erotica producers who used first-class mail exclusively, such as Kris Studio in Chicago (discussed below, p. 252), avoided many problems with the Post Office.

The three key administrative sanctions employed against erotica producers during the period of this dissertation were: (1) nonmailability rulings, (2) mail blocks, and (3) denials of second-class mailing privileges. Directly or indirectly, each affected erotica producers in the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles. I briefly review each below.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ See Robertus 1974, p. 107-164, for an in-depth discussion of the history of second-class mail and Post Office policies regarding it.

¹²⁸ Keeping within the period addressed in the dissertation, I refer to uses of these sanctions prior to 1972.

The *nonmailability ruling* was the “basic weapon” used by the Post Office to police material sent through the mail (Robertus 1974, p. 455). The non-mailability ruling was a procedure initiated by a local postal employee who perceived that material submitted for mailing might be obscene. If suspect, the material was confiscated and forwarded to Washington, D.C. for an official determination by staff attorneys at the Mailability Division of the office of General Counsel at the Post Office. This was an extremely haphazard process, where a lack of formal guidance left the screening process to chance—and often the idiosyncratic moral views of post office employees at the clerk level. Describing the process, Robertus writes (1974, p. 61):

Local postal employees were not given general instructions about what was and was not obscene nor were they systematically informed of current rulings. Thus, postal employees would accept for mailing material which had been found nonmailable and would send to Washington material which had already been cleared. The standards varied among post offices so that officials in New York City reported that they received magazines accepted by the Chicago post office but which the New York personnel regarded as obscene.

If material was determined to be non-mailable, the sender (who to this point was unaware that their material was being scrutinized) was informed and given a short period of time to file a challenge to the ruling. If challenged, an administrative hearing was held. If the sender was unsatisfied with the result of the hearing, their only recourse was to file suit in Federal Court (this required resources that many organizations did not have). Throughout the period of review the materials were withheld from the mail (Paul and Schwartz 1961, p. 92-93).

The administrative hearings held by the Post Office were far from models of due process. Until 1952, the Post Office combined the investigative and adjudication processes, so that the same individual initially making the determination of obscenity might also conduct hearings and make a final ruling

in the case. This procedure was in direct violation of federal law applied to other government agencies, and was successfully challenged in Federal Court in the 1952 case of *Door v. Donaldson* (195 F.2nd 764).¹²⁹

The non-mailability ruling ended as an effective Post Office tactic with the 1962 decision of *Manual v. Day*, mentioned above (see also p. 257 below).¹³⁰ This case was sparked by a non-mailability ruling, where the Post Office determined that the homoerotic *MANual* magazine was obscene and banned it from the mail. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed this action, suggesting that the Post Office lacked the statutory authority to declare materials non-mailable. In response, in domestic cases the Post Office ended the imposition of administrative non-mailability rulings in favor of formal criminal prosecution (Friedman 1971, p. 21).¹³¹

The *mail-block* was a tactic that was extensively used in obscenity cases during the 1950's, under the administration of Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield. Originally developed to stop those actively engaged in fraud, a mail-block stops all mail addressed to a specific addressee and returns the mail to its sender stamped "unlawful." This means that the intended recipient is engaged in an unlawful activity. The Post Office employed a twist to the fraud order in order to extend the mail-block tactic to cases of obscenity: it imposed

¹²⁹ The federal law in question was the Administrative Procedure Act, passed in 1946, which required a separation of investigative and decision-making functions in federal agencies. These rules were simply ignored by the Post Office until it was forced into compliance by the federal court (cf. Paul and Schwartz 1961, p. 95-96; Robertus 1974, p. 65-67).

¹³⁰ J. Edward Day was Postmaster General during the Kennedy administration, from January 1961 to September 1963.

¹³¹ This policy shift is also noted in U.S. Post Office, Chief Postal Inspector ([1961] 1972), § 151.3. This procedural change may help to explain the steady increase—from 1962 to 1965—in arrests reflected in the histogram on page 129. As noted above, the number of criminal prosecutions sharply dropped when the Supreme Court decisively narrowed the criteria for obscenity in the 1966 *Fanny Hill* decision.

mail-blocks in cases where material implicitly marketed as obscene was, in the estimation of the Post Office, not obscene. In other words, the goods actually delivered were not as saucy as promised. Of course, this is a classic Catch-22 situation: if the subject of the mail block argued that they were not engaged in fraudulent advertising, then the material could be legally actionable on grounds of obscenity. One Postal Inspector is quoted as noting: "This is kind of a sticky situation, prosecuting someone for failing to do something illegal" (Roberts 1966, p. 67). Mail-blocks were also used against producers who used fictitious names.

Revocation of second-class mailing privileges was a third tactic used by the Post Office. Second-class mailing permits were crucial to the economic survival of many magazines, and the Post Office exploited this area of vulnerability to shut down or influence magazines that were deemed offensive. The tactic was extensively used during the 1940's and 1950's, although it was successfully challenged in the 1946 case of *Hannegan v. Esquire*. (347 U.S. 146). In this famous case, the Post Office had revoked the second-class mailing permit of *Esquire* magazine on grounds of obscenity. This administrative ruling was challenged by *Esquire* and eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. Although it lost the *Esquire* case, the Post Office continued to threaten revocation of second-class mailing permits. In practice, this was an effective means of intimidation. In most cases the mere threat of a revocation was sufficient to compel publishers to conform to Post Office demands.

4.23 Other Law Enforcement Agencies

At the federal level, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is charged with enforcement of U.S.C. Title 18, § 1462, which prohibits the transportation of obscene material in interstate commerce. This means freight shipment across state lines using all means other than the U.S. mail. An exception is cases where interstate shipments are in conjunction with mail service, in which case the U.S. Postal Inspection Service assumed primary responsibility for the investigation.

The FBI during the period of this dissertation took a strong public position against pornography. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover offered the cooperation of the agency to anti-obscenity organizations, and published articles condemning the “smut” trade.¹³² More directly, the FBI actively investigated producers in the American Fetish style such as Irving Klaw and Leonard Burtman, and cooperated with other law enforcement agencies in police actions directed against them. I have no doubt that the FBI also investigated organizations and producers associated with the Gay Leather style; however, unlike the situation with the American Fetish style, I have no documentary evidence of such investigations.

At the state and local level, law enforcement officials enforced a variety of laws concerning obscenity, which tended to conform to the broad parameters of federal law. State and local officials also brought to bear a variety of additional tactics, such as revocation of professional and business licenses.

¹³² For example, see J. Edgar Hoover’s article “Let’s Wipe Out the Schoolyard Sex Racket” (Hoover 1957); and Hoover’s December 28, 1937 letter to Bishop John Noll, leader of the Catholic National Organization for Decency in Literature (NODL), which offered the cooperation of the FBI (CNOL, box 3, folder 3).

4.24 Morality Organizations

A third significant influence on the legal environment was that of moral entrepreneurs; specifically, anti-obscenity organizations. These organizations played a central role in constructing obscenity as a social problem.¹³³ From the 1870's to the 1970's, anti-obscenity organizations, often led by members of the clergy, mobilized citizens and collaborated with law enforcement officials in the persecution of erotica producers and distributors. These organizations also successfully lobbied legislatures at both the federal and state level for more stringent anti-obscenity legislation.¹³⁴ The activities of Anthony Comstock, leader of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice and the key lobbyist for the language that now appears in U.S.C. title 18, section 1461, provides an early and clear example. A later example is Citizens for Decent Literature (CDL), an anti-obscenity organization founded in 1957 and led by attorney Charles H. Keating, Jr..¹³⁵ CDL was an extremely sophisticated organization that, among other activities, sponsored seminars that trained law enforcement

¹³³ "Smut" was immodestly linked to a variety of social evils by these organizations. An example is provided in the official theme of the Citizens for Decent Literature national convention held in Chicago in 1963: "Judeo-Christian civilization is in peril. Moral decay rots our human resources from within. A voracious enemy—atheistic and materialistic—encircles us from without. Each of us must key ourselves to the titanic struggle. In this Convention we offer you a key—The Key to Decency" (CDL 1963 National Convention Program, KIRSGR vertical file, *Censorship Organizations—Citizens for Decent Literature*).

¹³⁴ One of the earliest laws specifically proscribing SM was a 1956 New York State statute that included sadism and masochism in its definition of obscenity (Friedman 1970, p. 230). This law emerged in part due to lobbying efforts by religious morality organizations, which were concerned about these categories (see "Pornography Probe On Here Bids Publishers End 'Filth'," *New York Herald Tribune*, Jan. 6, 1956).

¹³⁵ Keating, one of the most prominent moralists of the 1960's, fell from grace during the savings & loan debacle of the 1980's. The government bailout of his failed Lincoln Savings and Loan cost taxpayers an estimated 3.4 billion dollars. He was convicted of racketeering, fraud and conspiracy and served over four years in prison before being released in 1996.

officials in current obscenity law and legal tactics.¹³⁶ The organization provided free consultant services in obscenity cases, and CDL attorneys would, if necessary, directly “assist local prosecutors in their local jurisdictions.”¹³⁷ This assistance could be extremely direct: “if a prosecutor wishes, CDL will ghost-write his entire brief for him” (Roberts 1966, p. 103). The CDL illustrates how closely private anti-obscenity organizations collaborated with law enforcement officials during the mid-twentieth century.¹³⁸ Other major anti-obscenity organizations active during the period addressed in this dissertation include the National Organization for Decent Literature (NODL), the League of Decency, and Operation Yorkville.

Operation Yorkville, an organization that will be highlighted in this analysis, was the key anti-obscenity organization in the New York City area during the 1960’s.¹³⁹ Operation Yorkville was formed in 1961 as a multi-denominational religious censorship organization. It was led by Father Morton A. Hill (1917-1985), a Catholic priest affiliated with St. Ignatius Loyala church

¹³⁶ See brochure for “The Control of Obscene Literature,” a two-day CDL professional seminar “for prosecutors, police, judges” held in Dallas 11-12 May, 1967. Topics included: The Law, How to Prepare and Try a Case, and How to Make an Arrest. (KIRSGR vertical file: *Censorship Organizations—Citizens for Decent Literature.*)

¹³⁷ CDL pamphlet, “How to start an anti-pornography drive in your community,” c. 1975 (KIRSGR vertical file: *Censorship Organizations—Citizens for Decent Literature.*).

¹³⁸ See Hall 1964; Roberts 1966, p. 100-104; Sheridan 1963. Postmaster General Summerfield’s address before the second annual convention of the CDL is cited in footnote 120, page 131 above.

¹³⁹ For contemporary background see Kempton, Murray, “Impurities in Yorkville: With Pornography One Thing Leads to Another,” *The New Republic*, March 16, 1963, p. 13-15. Operation Yorkville changed its name to Morality in Media during the summer of 1968. For newsletters and other documents see the KIRSGR vertical file folder, *Morality in Media*.

in Manhattan.¹⁴⁰ The organization specifically targeted erotica producers in the American Fetish style, and its activities affected producers and organizations in both the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles. I return to Operation Yorkville and other organizations that intersect with key producers in the discussion below.



Figure 97: Father Morton A. Hill, leader of Operation Yorkville, displaying representative smut (PC)

¹⁴⁰ Father Hill remained active as an anti-obscenity crusader for many years. On January 2, 1968, Father Hill was appointed to the Johnson administration Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. Charles H. Keating, Jr. was also appointed to this commission.

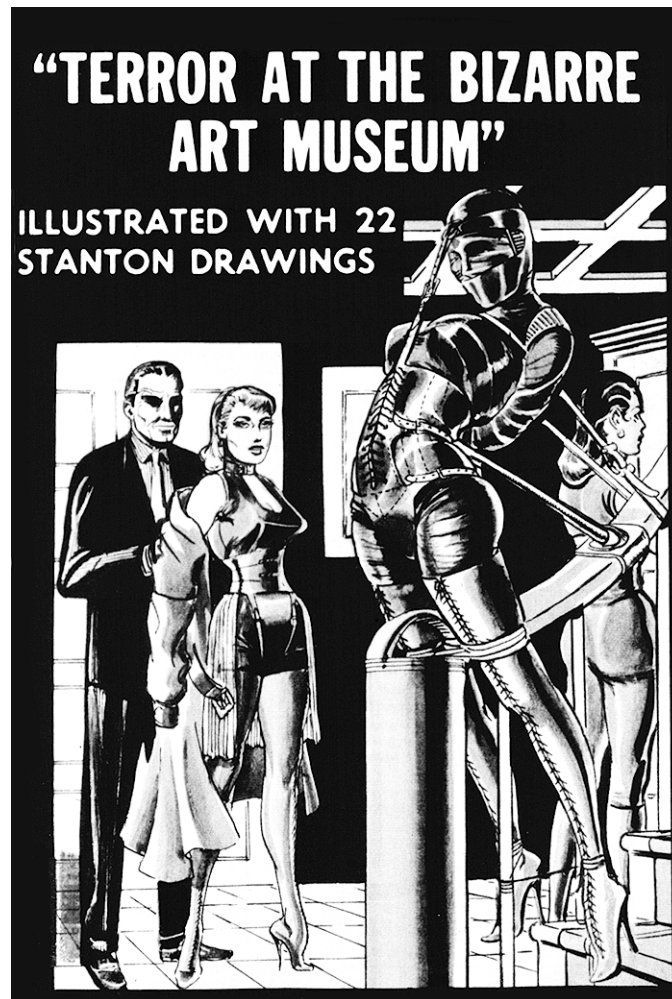


Figure 98: Irving Klaw NUTRIX booklet, 1959. This particular booklet was frequently cited in legal actions against Klaw. (KIRSGR)

4.3 The American Fetish Style matures

4.31 Irving Klaw

The content of material published by Klaw, his links to subcultural practitioners, and his business practices were discussed in § 3.5 of the previous chapter. Here, after a review of key categories of material published by Klaw during the period from 1950 to 1963, I focus on his legal problems. Klaw suffered

virtually every form and level of persecution directed against erotica producers during this period, and thus his case highlights key features of the legal environment faced by producers in the American Fetish style.

4.311 Klaw products: 1950-1963

For the most part, during the 1950-1963 period Klaw retained his core themes of bondage, fetish, fighting girls, and female domination.¹⁴¹ As noted above, after the mid-1950's death of "Little John," Klaw's key practitioner consultant, Klaw and his sister Paula continued to produce photography that conformed to the conventions of the bondage and fetish genres. Klaw also continued to enlist practitioners in the production of photography, and sold photo sets by "amateurs" that were often quite innovative. However, the primary areas of innovation in Klaw's operation between 1950 and 1963, when he ceased producing fetishistic material, were in fetish art and filmmaking. I first address Klaw art, and then his role as a fetish filmmaker.



Figure 99: Klaw hard media "amateur bondage photo series" c. 1960 (Bélier Press)

¹⁴¹ One prominent new theme in the NUTRIX booklets is female impersonation, a topic whose introduction has yet to be explained (presumably, Klaw established ties with practitioners who had an interest in female impersonation.) Many of these booklets, such as *Female Impersonators on Parade*, volumes 1-14 (1960-1963), had little or no SM/fetish content. With other American Fetish producers of the time, such as Leonard Burtman, Klaw also published transvestite materials with "forced feminization" themes. Examples include *Dominating Woman Turns Man into Girl* (1959) and *Disciplined Male Changed to Female* (1960)

As a publisher, Klaw played an important role in facilitating the development of American Fetish art. Artists employed by Klaw during this period—in addition to already mentioned Coutts, Stanton, and Bilbrew—included Jim, Mario, Mory, George Neuman, Jay, Ruiz, T. Pete, Foss, Earl, Marco, Saxon, Nichola, “H”, and Bonda (most are pseudonyms). This is an impressive list of new talent. The technical proficiency of these artists varied, but some had very distinctive styles that contributed to the development of the bizarre aesthetic, and would become associated with Klaw. For example, when Kunzle writes of Klaw’s “sophisticated, torturously sado-masochistic, machinoid-bondage nightmares” (Kunzle 1982, p. 292), he very likely has in mind artists such as “Jim”—the pseudonym for a French illustrator whose trademark was bizarre techno-bondage in steel, reminiscent of Carlo’s elaborate SM scenarios.

Through 1958 the primary medium in which Klaw sold the works of these artists was 8”x10” glossy photographic paper, on which he reproduced individual images or cartoon serials. The cartoon serials included titles such as *Leather Boot Club*, *Mrs. Tyrant’s Finishing School*, *Yolanda’s Bizarre Experience*, and *Sextetta’s Empire of Bondage*. “Episodes” (i.e. sheets) were sold individually and in sets, with discounts for large orders. In 1950 the cost was 50 cents per sheet. Over 120 of these serials were eventually published by Klaw.

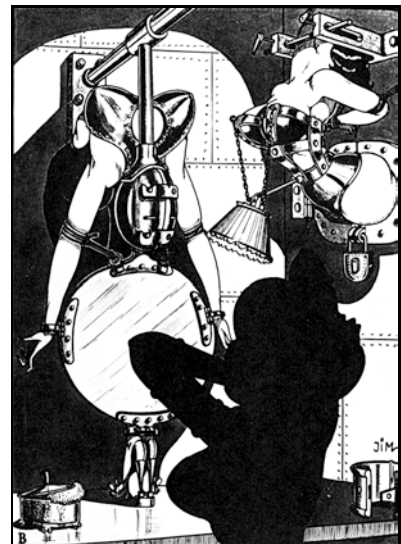


Figure 100: A representative "machinoid-bondage nightmare," Klaw illustration by Jim, 1954-55 (Bélier Press)

In 1959, Klaw's New Jersey based NUTRIX company began to produce a series of digest-size black booklets that are among the most recognizable mid-century products in the American Fetish style. (They were certainly recognized by agencies of social control.) Much of the material contained in these booklets was reprinted, often in abridged form, from Klaw's earlier cartoon serials and photography sets. The first NUTRIX booklet was *Pleasure Parade*, published in 1959, which featured fetish model Bettie Page and ran through 6 issues. *Pleasure Parade* was followed by approximately two hundred additional booklets. In creating the NUTRIX booklets Klaw hired writers, in some cases practitioner-oriented, to create narratives that connected various pre-existing images from his inventory. In addition, Klaw wrote some of the texts himself.

Much of this later NUTRIX material stands apart for its singular lack of subtlety. In most of this work the aesthetic sensibilities of the refined practitioner (as found, for example, in the work of Coutts) are replaced by the literal presentation of the pornographer—very likely revealing the hand of Klaw. In a 1965 court report the NUTRIX booklets were accurately described in these terms: "A text in each booklet described in a puerile and asinine fashion the activity depicted in the drawings" (U.S. v. Irving Klaw and Jack Kramer, 350 F. 2d 155, 1965, p. 2744-2745). These booklets formed the foundation of criminal charges against Klaw levied in 1963. I return to this below.

In the area of innovation in media, Klaw was probably the first American producer of commercial bondage and fetish films.

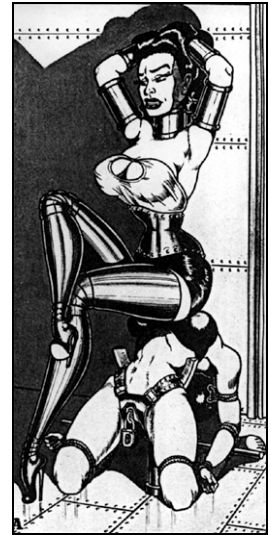


Figure 101: Jim illustration from "Baroness Steel." This Klaw cartoon serial was first published in 1954-55; it was later reprinted in NUTRIX booklet form as *Baroness Steele's Museum of Torture* (2 volumes, 1962). (Bélier Press)

Klaw's first film was a 16MM bondage film produced in late 1949. This was followed in 1950 by additional films addressing other staple Klaw categories such as fighting girls and high-heels. Klaw's mode of operation as a filmmaker seems to have been fundamentally the same as in other media. In a 1950 letter to Kinsey, Klaw provided an interesting description of the content and origin of a recently completed film:¹⁴²

Movie #2, is a special high-heel stocking movie, made up for a customer, according to his requests. There is very little action in this movie, as the main object is, to have a voluptuous, dark-haired girl, showing off her stockings and high-heels. This is called "Sultry Queen in High Heels" and runs 100 feet long... It shows the model walking around slowly, sitting on a chair, showing off the silk stockings and high heels. It seems, the stocking customers favor very little action in this type of movie, preferring, to see mostly, the lower portion of the body, concentrating on the stockings and the high heels, which is exactly how it was made and the purpose behind it.

This film was available for \$12.00. Klaw later produced a large-screen film, *Varietease*, that was nationally distributed in 1954. This film contained fetishistic elements, such as high-heels, but was burlesque rather than American Fetish in style.



Figure 102: NUTRIX "Tame-Azons" publication, 1960. Note that the "subdued" man is in drag. (PC)

¹⁴² Klaw letter to Kinsey, June 14, 1950 (KIRSGR). Punctuation as in original.

4.312 Klaw and the Legal Environment

It looks like my fight with the Post Office is coming to a head and that the battle to stay in business has started.

On June 15, 1950 at 1 P.M. a Post Office Inspector called Charles Bull [pseudonym] (who is head of Postal Inspectors regarding Sexual Matters) in New York City, visited my store, and requested May 31st edition of Cartoon and Model Parade Catalog [...] and stated that individuals, church organizations and publishers and also various competitors of mine, had complained about my business of selling obscene photos. He requested various bits of information, some of which was not relevant to the photos on hand, such as flagellation, sadism, where I advertised, who I did business with etc., some of which was refused information to him.

Postal Inspector Charles Bull was in my store for an hour making various observations related to postal laws etc. and said that he would get in touch with me soon. I referred the matter to my legal counsel who requested a meeting in Inspector Bull's office in main post office at 33rd St. & 8th Ave N.Y.C. which will be held in the inspectors office on Monday, June 26, 1950.

Over the telephone, Post Master Bull told my lawyer that the complaints were against the various cartoon by John Willie on "Sweet Gwendoline," "Gale, Girl Reporter," & the so called flagellation photos, drawing by Mory, which I've sold to you in the past. Inspector Bull told my lawyer over the telephone, that if I signed a stipulation that I would refrain from cartoon drawings and photos or sadism, masochism, and flagellation, etc. that the Post Office would be satisfied. This is the same as going out of business for me.

Klaw letter to Kinsey, June 22, 1950 (KIRSGR)

The period of relative calm that existed in the business of Irving Klaw ended in 1950. In 1950, 1955, and again in 1963, in a legal battle that was eventually decided (in favor of Klaw) at the U.S. Court of Appeals, Irving Klaw was subjected to scrutiny and harassment by agencies of social control.¹⁴³ These included law enforcement agencies, Senate investigative committees, and a variety of morality agencies and the mass media. Klaw resisted these attacks and throughout this period continued to produce material; indeed, during the 1950's and early 1960's some of the most distinctive American Fetish material published by Klaw appeared. However, in 1965 an exhausted Klaw finally

¹⁴³ I focus here on Klaw's difficulties with federal law enforcement agencies.

closed the fetish component of his business and destroyed much of his inventory—just before the erotica market burst open in a wave of unprecedented explicitness. He died in 1966.

Klaw's problems with agencies of social control are documented from a variety of sources. These include contemporary correspondence with Alfred Kinsey, whom Klaw met in the summer of 1947 when Kinsey visited Klaw's store in New York City,¹⁴⁴ official documents from law enforcement agencies and Congress, and a recent secondary literature that addresses Klaw. The Kinsey Institute correspondence with Klaw, which comprises 196 letters in the date range of January 4, 1948 to April 11, 1966, is a particularly valuable source. Klaw kept Kinsey, and later Paul Gebhard, posted on his legal problems and provided information about his own materials and those of other erotica producers. During the course of my research, I also obtained documents from the FBI's file on Irving Klaw.

The earliest known police reference to Klaw is an April 27, 1942 FBI report, which indicated that an evaluation of Klaw's publications, sparked by a complaint, found them to be "not so lewd as to be considered obscene." By the late 1940's, Klaw was being actively investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.¹⁴⁵ Klaw was unaware of this at the time—his first indication of police trouble was in late 1949, when his advertisements were rejected by publishers such as the Harrison cheesecake magazines. These publishers were responding to pressures applied directly by the Post Office.¹⁴⁶ Specifically, the Post Office

¹⁴⁴ On Kinsey and Klaw's initial meeting, see Klaw letter to Kinsey, January 12, 1948 (KIRSGR)

¹⁴⁵ Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, July 3, 1950, "Re: Irving Klaw, Interstate Transportation of Obscene Matter." (RB)

¹⁴⁶ Klaw wrote to Kinsey: "I have had some interference with the magazines, who are rejecting some of my advertisements because of their sexual nature and because at present the Post Office is using pressure to have advertisements

threatened these magazines with revocation of their second-class mailing permit unless they made specified changes in the content of the magazine. These included deletion of advertisers of fetishistic material, such as Klaw.

In 1950 the Post Office took its first direct action against Klaw, which sparked the letter to Kinsey quoted in the beginning of this section. This episode commenced when Postal Inspectors, assigned to the New York office of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, met with Klaw and threatened him with a mail block if he did not cease publication of all material with fetishistic or SM content. As with other publishers, the Post Office tactic was to intimidate Klaw with threats and to seek his “voluntary” compliance with their demands. In the vast majority of cases this intimidation tactic worked. However, Klaw was making a significant income from his fetish and SM materials and refused to cease and desist from production voluntarily.

Contemporary FBI documents reveal that these Postal Inspectors were, in fact, operating independently, in somewhat of a cowboy mode.¹⁴⁷ An FBI memorandum, dated Nov. 13, 1950, provided a summary of conferences between FBI agents and the New York Postal Inspectors regarding Klaw:¹⁴⁸

on fetish photos out of the magazines” (Klaw letter to Kinsey, November 17, 1949; KIRSGR).

¹⁴⁷ The FBI’s interest in Klaw was sparked by a complaint letter written to J. Edgar Hoover on June 23, 1950. Hoover personally replied to this letter, and evidently at his direction the FBI followed up with a check on Klaw. The FBI inquiry revealed that the Postal Inspection Service was engaged in an active investigation of Klaw. FBI agents periodically met with the New York Postal Inspectors conducting the investigation, and updated the Director on its status. The FBI determined that because Klaw’s operation was primarily a mail-order operation, and since it was being actively investigated by the Postal Inspection Service, independent FBI investigation was not warranted (Memorandum, SAC New York to Director, FBI, Nov. 13, 1950 (RB)). The professionalism of the FBI in dealing with this matter contrasts rather sharply with that of the Postal Inspection Service.

¹⁴⁸ Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, November 13, 1950. Double brackets “[]” are my edits; single brackets “[]” reflect deletions on the copies of the original documents. These documents were obtained under a

[[Postal]] Inspector [deleted] has examined catalogs, photographs and film that are distributed by KLAU and is convinced that he does not handle the type of material on which a conviction could be based, but only such material as might be considered questionable and not definitely obscene.

In other words, the Postal Inspectors' threats against Klaw were made with full awareness that his case did not warrant criminal prosecution. In any event, local Postal Inspector meetings with Klaw were made without consultation with the Post Office Solicitor in Washington, D.C.—the official who had the authority actually to impose the threatened mail block—and the New York Postal Inspectors were not certain that they could, in fact, invoke such a sanction against Klaw. When Klaw refused to comply with their demands, the Postal Inspectors shifted ground and offered to negotiate a “compromise” agreement. This would have allowed Klaw to publish fetishistic cheesecake photos, but would require that he cease production of bondage and flagellation images. Klaw rejected this too, and he and his attorney indicated that, if necessary, they would go to federal court to pursue an injunction restraining the Post Office. Faced with a pugnacious Klaw, the Postal Inspectors retreated and dropped the issue. Klaw, who was unaware that he was a target of wholly local strong-arm tactics, expected further Post Office action that never occurred. On October 27, 1950, Klaw wrote to Kinsey, “I have not heard anything more from the post-office and as I do not believe in pressing the matter too far, I have decided to wait until they get in touch with me again through my lawyer” (KIRSGR). They never did.¹⁴⁹

Freedom of Information Act request, and have names and text segments lined out with heavy black marker.

¹⁴⁹ On the points made in this paragraph, see Klaw letters to Kinsey, July 18, 1950; August 9, 1950; October 9, 1950; October 27, 1950; December 18, 1951 (KIRSGR). See also SAC, New York memorandum to Director, FBI, November 13, 1950, which summarizes information obtained by FBI investigators from the New York Postal Inspectors working on the Klaw case. This and other germane memoranda are found in Klaw's FBI file.

Throughout this episode of police bullying, the Postal Inspectors were well aware that their case against Klaw was, at best, weak. As noted above, from the beginning of his entry into the fetish business Klaw exercised great care to avoid the tacit boundaries of obscenity law. During the late 1940's and 1950's, these unwritten judicial boundaries included visible pubic hair, and males and females together in sexual situations.¹⁵⁰ The material produced by Klaw—e.g., females alone in fetishistic garb or bondage, or females with females—did not meet these contemporary criteria for obscenity. Concretely, this meant that a federal law enforcement agency such as the Postal Inspection Service would likely not be able to persuade a U.S. Attorney to indict Klaw, the essential first step in a criminal prosecution.¹⁵¹

The FBI summaries indicate that, in its moral policing efforts, the Postal Inspection Service was not constrained by the fact that it probably could not win the cooperation of the criminal justice system (even at the level of an indictment). Nor were zealous Postal Inspectors constrained in their efforts by the likelihood that they could not back up, if necessary, their oral threats with actual administrative sanctions.

Klaw won this round with the Postal Inspection Service, but he still experienced business difficulties because of the Post Office. Using similar tactics (although here threatening loss of second-class mailing privileges, rather than a mail block), Postal Inspectors had effectively intimidated the publishers of a variety of magazines, including Robert Harrison. Klaw found that most of his advertisements were rejected. Klaw wrote to Kinsey on February 7, 1950 (KIRSGR): “The publishers, being panicky and not being able to band or stick

¹⁵⁰ Bienvenu interview with Monte-Levy, January 15, 1997; JASC interview, p. 2 (KIRSGR).

together, got panic-stricken and have forbidden acceptance of any ad concerning sex at present, for fear of losing their second-class permit.” Klaw’s efforts to get his ads into magazines was a constant struggle, directly thwarted by agencies ranging from the Post Office to the Foreign Legion Women’s Auxiliary (Klaw letter to Kinsey, June 14, 1950; KIRSGR).

The next round of direct actions against Klaw commenced in 1955, and was linked to the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Committee on the Judiciary (see United States Congress, Senate. 1955a, 1955b, 1956). This was a special investigative committee commissioned in 1955 and chaired by Senator Estes Kefauver. The mission of the committee was to make a “full and complete study of juvenile delinquency in the United States,’ including its ‘extent and character’ and ‘its causes and contributing factors.”¹⁵² It was assumed by Kefauver that there was a causal relationship between pornography and juvenile delinquency, and several hearing sessions focused on this topic. A wide variety of individuals were called to testify, ranging from psychiatric “experts” to pornographers.¹⁵³ Irving Klaw was issued a subpoena by the Subcommittee on May 12, 1955, and testified before the committee on May 31, 1955. Klaw refused to cooperate with the obviously hostile inquiry, and answered all but the initial questions with “I decline to

¹⁵¹ This in fact happened in 1942, when the U.S. Attorney at Kansas City declined to prosecute Klaw because of weak evidence (Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, July 3, 1950).

¹⁵² United States Congress, Senate, 1956, p. 1. The published reports and hearing transcripts of the Kefauver Committee are available at NARA. Unfortunately, the records of special investigative committees are sealed for a period of fifty years. In this case, the archival records are closed until 2005. I expect that these documents will prove to be a rich source of information on erotica producers and relationships that existed among various agencies of social control in the mid-1950’s.

¹⁵³ A common linkage in testimony is between fetishism (e.g., high heels), perversion, and subsequent criminal behavior—a slippery slope that begins with a sexy image and might end in murder (e.g., see United States Congress, Senate. 1955a, p. 214).

answer under the fifth amendment of the Constitution...". In response, an angry Kefauver cited Klaw for contempt.

The year following the Kefauver inquest was a very bad time indeed for Irving Klaw. He was vilified in the news media as a result of the Kefauver hearing, and labeled as one of the nation's kingpins of smut.¹⁵⁴ In addition, both the FBI and the Postal Inspection Service renewed investigations against him—directly as a result of the Kefauver hearings.¹⁵⁵ Klaw wrote to Kinsey on July 11, 1955 (KIRSGR):

Because of the Kefauver Investigation publicity, the post-office has started a hearing due to be heard in Washington, D.C., Aug. 2nd, to have the mail of IRVING KLAU stopped, as Unlawful, because they claim the photos, cartoon drawings, etc., are lewd, lascivious, obscene, indecent, etc., to which my attorney Coleman and Gangill has put in a reply denying my photos are lewd, obscene, etc.

The Post Office ruling resulting from this hearing was delivered on December 16, 1955.¹⁵⁶ It stated that Klaw was engaged in an unlawful enterprise, and ordered a mail-block. Klaw appealed this ruling within the Post Office, and on July 9, 1956 the initial decision was affirmed. A mail block was put in place for "IRVING KLAU, and his agents and representatives as such" the same day. The mail block was in place until August 22, 1958, when the General Counsel of the Post Office Department rescinded the order on the grounds that it was subject to challenge due to recent court decisions. During the interim period mail addressed to Irving Klaw was returned to its sender stamped "unlawful."

¹⁵⁴ E.g., "Dirty-Pix Probers Entangle 3," *New York News*, June 1, 1955, p. 5; "Pinup King Loses Mail Privileges," *Washington Post*, July 17, 1956, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ An August 30, 1955 FBI report explicitly connected the agency's investigation with the Kefauver committee: "This investigation is predicated upon the receipt of information from the Bureau, that the subject's activities were of interest to the Senate Sub-Committee Investigating Juvenile Delinquency in regard to the subject dealing in the obscene material field and that his activities should be checked" (Klaw FBI file; RB).

¹⁵⁶ Postal Inspector Harry Simon, who is mentioned above and will emerge again in this narrative, was the investigating officer in this case.

The December 16, 1955 hearing report provides insight into the worldview underlying the Post Office anti-obscenity actions, and the nature of constraints faced by producers in the American Fetish style during the 1950's.¹⁵⁷ The basic legal standard applied in the Post Office hearing was based on the Hicklin standard; as articulated in Klaw's Post Office hearing, for a ruling of obscenity "it is sufficient if there is a tendency to corrupt the morals by the arousal of impure sex desire" (ibid., p. 22).¹⁵⁸ The existence of such a tendency was demonstrated by the obviously sexy nature of Klaw's products. The style of this report generalizable to other cases during this period (ibid., p. 18-19):

An examination of the above described pictures, viz., the cartoons and photographs of bound, gagged, spanking, etc., subjects, as well as the other photographs in evidence, that is those bearing titles such as "Popular Cheese Cake Model Poses," "High Heel and Lingerie Poses" and the three movies in evidence discloses and I so find that nearly all of them when viewed by the normal average male would result in such viewer being erotically and lustfully stimulated and that they violate and offend the present and prevailing standards of decency, modesty and morals of the country. They would not only corrupt the morals of the average adult but would be particularly of bad effect on the youth of the country as well as the experienced. As previously stated these photographs and cartoons display nearly nude young curvaceous women. In many instances the breasts are exposed to a considerable extent, the panties are almost transparent and the subject shown in provocative poses or positions. The motion picture film entitled "Voluptuous Body Dance by Tempest Storm" (Exhibit 2-J-1) displays a young curvaceous bosomy woman scantily attired and wearing long silk hose. The breasts are covered with material almost entirely transparent.

¹⁵⁷ Post Office Department, Office of the Chief Hearing Examiner, December 16, 1955, *Initial Decision of Hearing Examiner in the Matter of the Complaint that IRVING KLAU, at New York, New York, is conducting an unlawful enterprise through the mails in violation of 39 U.S. Code, Section 259a*. H.E. Docket No. 3/225. (Appeal ruling and administrative orders are attached.) (USPO Library, obscenity rulings binder.)

¹⁵⁸ Dr. Carpman, a medical "expert," testified against Klaw at the Post Office hearing. He repeated a version of the slippery-slope argument that had been a theme of the Kefauver hearings: "there are many people in this world who masturbate with a picture in their mind of being spanked, or spanking somebody. I am positive a picture of this kind, if it falls into the hands of susceptible persons—and there are many of them—it will just work havoc with them. They will just continue and continue masturbating and will make no effort to get on a normal path" (ibid., p. 15).

She moves about in a dance fashion sensuously twisting parts of her body including her hips in what is known as the “grinds” and slowly caresses her legs and body. There are close-up views of her bosom and emphasis made of views showing the sensuous movements of the subject from the rear while she is disrobing. In the movie “G-String Dance” (Exhibit 3-D-1) the subject is a young curvaceous woman scantily dressed and with long silk hose. She moves her body about in what is known as “bumps and grinds.” There are views of her buttocks shown almost completely exposed during such dance routine. In the third movie called “Lilli Dawn, Siren of Tease” a young curvaceous woman is again shown. She goes through an act commonly known as a “strip tease.” After removing her outer garments she is displayed wearing a very scanty costume which includes long silk hose which she rolls down during her performance and then rerolls them with her hand moving about her pubic area.

Klaw was found guilty of inspiring lustful thoughts.

In 1956, while subject to the Post Office mail-block, Klaw established a second business location in Jersey City, New Jersey, where he used two corporate titles, first Ikay Products, Inc. and then Jani Sales Company, before settling on NUTRIX company in 1958 (Rund 1979). Klaw had first used NUTRIX as a corporate title in 1950, during the period of his initial troubles with the Post Office.¹⁵⁹ The New Jersey location handled virtually all of Klaw’s American Fetish materials, while the Movie Star News store in New York City handled the non-kinky portion of his business; i.e., movie star photos, children’s cartoons, etc.. There is little doubt that this separation of locations, functions, and corporate titles was linked to Post Office problems.

¹⁵⁹ NUTRIX is first mentioned in Klaw’s letter to Kinsey, October 9, 1950 (KIRSGR)

Klaw's next and final major legal battle commenced on June 27, 1963, when Klaw's NUTRIX company in New Jersey was raided by United States Marshals and Postal Inspectors. Klaw and his business associate and brother-in-law Jack Kramer were indicted on 85 counts of violation of U.S.C. Title 18, § 1461, based on an investigation conducted by Postal Inspector Harry Simon. Largely based on the digest-sized black NUTRIX booklets, in February 1964 Klaw was tried, found guilty of 65 counts, and given a two year sentence and \$5,000 fine. The judgment was appealed and on July 15, 1965 reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals (350 F. 2d 155).

Klaw won the case at appeal, but the arrest and trial process took a heavy toll on him and his business. NUTRIX ceased operation after the conviction; Klaw wrote to Paul Gebhard on March 20, 1964: "The Nutrix Co., and Nutrix Corp. 35 Montgomery Street, Jersey City, NJ are out of business" (KIRSGR). In the process of closing down his business Klaw attempted to sell his inventory, and eventually destroyed most of it. As his sister Paula recounted in an interview (Harmony Communications 1976, p. 56):

Q: I understand it's all gone now — all the photos you took, the amateur sets, the cartoons, film, equipment. What happened to it all?

A: That's very sad. Irving's attorney thought it might make a good impression during his trial if Irving destroyed all the merchandise he was being prosecuted for selling. He had me take it all over to our office in New Jersey and do away with it. We used a paper shredder, and I just stood there and watched, tears running down my face. All that work; all those years. What a waste.

As we will see, John Coutts also finally destroyed his materials and went out of business—at the prompting of both the Postal Inspection Service and his deteriorating health.

4.313 Klaw: Structural constraints and aesthetic content

Klaw's experiences as a publisher clearly demonstrate the effects of structural, specifically legal and police, constraints on the content and promulgation of erotic representations in the American Fetish style. Klaw, as a rational businessman eager to maximize profits and keep out of trouble, displayed no inclination to go beyond standards established in criminal prosecutions in the courts. Klaw's FBI file makes this point quite clearly:¹⁶⁰

During one of the conferences between an agent of this office and Inspector [deleted] at his office, he had a discussion with Attorney [deleted] who represents KLAW, and it is quite apparent that KLAW does not deal in material definitely obscene and according to both Inspector [deleted] and [deleted] KLAW is too smart to deal with or handle strictly obscene material. [[...]]

It is of interest to note in all of the pictures and film where flagellations are shown, or where one person is tied up and/or gagged by another or others, that it is all performed by females, and how carefully KLAW has kept males out of the pictures so as to cunningly avoid what may possibly appear to be obscene.¹⁶¹

However, this did not protect him from agencies, such as the U.S. Post Office, that applied their own, far more stringent, standards in administrative actions and cowboy law enforcement.

Materials with even mildly fetishistic content were targeted by agencies of social control during this period—although their technical illegality, as defined in statute and tacit judicial criteria, was ambiguous. This made wide promulgation of fetishistic styles problematic at best. For example, as Klaw wrote to Kinsey on October 27, 1950 (KIRSGR; italics added):

¹⁶⁰ Memorandum, SAC, New York to Director, FBI, November 13, 1950; Klaw FBI file (RB).

¹⁶¹ Apparently, lesbian sexuality or SM was not on the map of acknowledged sexual situations in 1950, and hence could not be obscene.

notice the fact, the Harrison Publications, "Beauty Parade, Wink, Whisper," etc., have retouched the high-heels on the shoes of the models they have used in the January 1951 issues.

When I inquired about it, they didn't give me any reply, but, I heard from another source, there is some antiquated rule and law on the books of a certain state, which prohibits the use of photos of girls wearing high heels on shoes. *The legal maximum is a 3 inch high-heels on a girl's shoes.*

To this Kinsey replied (Kinsey letter to Klaw, October 30, 1950; KIRSGR):

I am particularly interested in the note that the Harrison publication is reducing the height of heels on their girls. This is the most curious detail for the Post Office to have choked over. I will go after copies of all of the January issues of their magazines.

To make sense of such prohibitions, from the perspective of the censor, one must reference a moral worldview in which even mild expressions of sexuality (e.g., high heels) were interpreted as immoral and socially destructive. The moralistic (and nationalistic) discourse of law enforcement agencies, the mass media, legislative bodies, and even psychiatry is filled with ominous predictions of the effects of such immoral materials on America, and particularly America's youth.¹⁶² The cultural values underlying this worldview were fundamentally chaste, conservative, and religious.

As noted by innumerable commentators on the 1950's, groups advocating this worldview were politically powerful during this period (e.g., Halberstam 1993). Klaw, always an astute analyst of threats to his business, had no doubt that anti-obscenity organizations played an important role in actions directed against him. He repeatedly referenced this relationship in letters to Kinsey. For example, referencing the refusal of cheesecake magazines to accept his advertising, Klaw wrote to Kinsey on February 7, 1950 (KIRSGR):

¹⁶² Examples of contemporary works that cite a relationship between obscenity and moral disintegration or juvenile delinquency include: Hall 1964; Hoover 1957; Kilpatrick 1960; Kuh 1967; Sheridan 1963; U.S. Congress, Senate 1955a, 1955b, 1956; Warburton 1959; Wertham 1953; Wharton 1964; Winchester 1960.

the post-office officials under pressure of the blue-nose do-gooder-decency legions, [who] have put sufficient pressure on the post-office, to get the post-office to threaten loss of the second-class mailing permit, that every publication needs, in order to remain in business.

This is illegal in my opinion, but my lawyer is afraid to battle the post-office and the decency legions, as they are too strong.

Of course, such “pressure” would hardly be effective unless key government officials, as well as rank-and-file law enforcement officers, aligned themselves with the chaste moral views promoted by these groups. This support is well documented in the key cases of Senator Estes Kefauver; J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI; and Arthur Summerfield, Postmaster General during the Eisenhower Administration (1953 to 1961).

To summarize, the aesthetic content and cultural promulgation of American Fetish material produced by Klaw were clearly constrained by agencies of social control. Klaw’s case also illustrates the complexity of anti-obscenity actions during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Agents of social control involved in anti-obscenity actions included law enforcement agencies, legislative bodies, anti-obscenity organizations, and the mass media; these operated both independently and in cooperation with each other. In the case of the Post Office, Klaw’s primary distribution system was also the key law enforcement agency engaged in actions against him. Until the Post Office was effectively constrained by the Courts in the early 1960’s, its program of informal intimidation aimed at producers of fetishistic materials—experienced by Klaw both directly and indirectly—was fairly successful. In such an environment, any broad cultural appropriation of the American Fetish style was problematic and unlikely at best.

4.32 John Coutts

“P.P.S. Beware of tappings on the walls & cold draughts in your ‘collection rooms’ — I’ll make a bobby-dazzler of a Ghost & haunt the place like crazy.”
From Coutts letter to Paul Gebhard, June 18, 1961

John Coutts continued to publish *Bizarre* magazine through 1956, and was a producer of American Fetish erotica through 1961. His development and key contributions to the American Fetish style were discussed in chapter three above. In this section I briefly review Coutts’ activities between 1950 and 1962.

In 1950, John Coutts was living and working in New York City. Although occasionally out of town because of jobs as a merchant seaman,¹⁶³ Coutts continued to produce *Bizarre* magazine, cartoon serials, and photo sets, which he sold on consignment and via mail order. Due to financial problems, *Bizarre* was not published between 1948 and 1950; Coutts resumed publication with issue #6 in 1951, and continued publication in New York to issue #20 in 1956. In 1957 Coutts sold *Bizarre* magazine to a close friend and moved to Los Angeles. *Bizarre* continued to be published by the new owner in New York through issue #26 in 1959 (Rund 1974, p. viii-ix). In Los Angeles, Coutts continued his mail-order operation, focusing on cartoons and photo sets.

As noted above, Coutts’ business operated on a much smaller scale than Klaw’s, and was not widely publicized. *Bizarre* magazine and other Coutts material were replete with fetishistic and bondage images, and met the operational criteria for obscenity being used by law enforcement agencies

¹⁶³ In a letter to Kinsey dated March 13, 1950, Klaw wrote that “John Willie has left town and is supposedly at sea and has not turned in any work for over three months now, had not written or gotten in touch with me about future work” (KIRSGR).

during the early 1950's. However, it was not until 1954, with the publication of *Bizarre* #1 and *Bizarre* #14, that Coutts experienced troubles with agencies of social control. These two issues were released within a few days of each other in 1954, and contained sarcastic remarks about religion. *Bizarre* #14 contained an article "NOW IT CAN BE TOLD! the true story of Adam & Eve" (p. 13-22), in which an earthy Eve was recast in a fetishized version of the classic story. *Bizarre* #1's "The Lowdown on the Uplift" (p. 6-8) disparagingly linked the development of fashion with ascetic Christian morality and aversion to the body. Coutts was convinced that the (Catholic) church was behind his 1954 police problems with *Bizarre*. He noted that following these issues "my book dealer told me the police had come and picked this up and picked that up and it wouldn't surprise me if the church simply got the local gendarmes--they've got them all under control--and said this magazine is going over the edge, and so on. It wasn't 'til then that I got into any trouble at all" (JASC interview, p. 18).

Although not documented, Coutts' assessment that the Catholic Church was directly involved in this 1954 episode is quite plausible. The general involvement of the Catholic Church in police actions during this period is documented from a variety of sources. For example, in 1958 Paul Gebhard compiled a set of fieldnotes under the heading "Cheesecake Magazine Censorship" in which he reviewed current relationships between the New York City police and the Catholic Church. Gebhard noted:¹⁶⁴

The Catholic Church seems to be the main motivating power behind this drive against cheesecake magazines and certainly the National Organization for Decent Literature is involved.

¹⁶⁴ "Cheesecake Magazine Censorship," KIRSGR vertical file, *Censorship—New York*. Excerpted from the original. This note is a transcript of oral notes made by Paul Gebhard on September 19, 1958 (see footnote 61, page 83 above).

The Legal Bureau of the Police Department prepares a list of magazines on the basis of Catholic advice. The policemen take the list of magazines and go about calling upon the dealers and using the list, they will either arrest or warn any dealer who happens to be selling the tabooed item.

The District Attorney and the Police Department are under strong Catholic influence and take directives regarding obscenity from them. The police often confer with a [name deleted] of Fordham University, who is apparently a lay spokesman for the church. This particular drive running from November 1956 to June of 1957 however, seems to have been sparked by some Monsignor in the church.

Coutts' troubles in 1954 evidently did not result in serious or sustained legal assault (unlike other contemporary producers), and for the next two years he continued to publish *Bizarre* and attend to his modest business in New York City. I return to the issue of Catholic influence in New York anti-obscenity actions below.

While in New York, Coutts actively socialized with an entourage of friends and drinking buddies. Some of these friends were members of Greg Day's social circle of fetishists (discussed above, p. 98), which included Coutts. In general, however, Coutts was very selective about his associates and did not socialize with the many customers and individuals with whom he came into contact through *Bizarre* and his mail order operation. He intensely disliked contemporary American Fetish producers Irving Klaw and Leonard Burtman. Coutts also had severe reservations about many of his customers. Coutts wrote to Gebhard:¹⁶⁵

As to the purchasers of this material—with few exceptions they are a sad type—and unpleasant to meet. Those who are pleasant are well satisfied with a companion—and they only occasionally buy something which they find rather intriguing. The regular customers become absolute cranks. I have met one or two—which is why I flatly refused to meet anyone.

¹⁶⁵ Coutts letter to Gebhard, October 10, 1960 (PHGA).

Coutts' negative attitude about contemporary American Fetish producers such as Klaw and Burtman, as well as many of his customers, was related to his sense of himself as an artist. This is a characteristic that distinguishes Coutts from most other producers in the American Fetish style. Although he wanted to make a living through his work, it was *not* his purpose "to sell photos to give some frustrated guy a kick."¹⁶⁶ Irving Klaw, in contrast, had no reservations about producing material for precisely this purpose—and built a successful business by explicitly pandering to his customers. Certainly, Coutts made much less money than he could have had he been willing to compromise on his vision of "clean sexy fun" (ibid.). His constraint in this area contributed to his financial difficulties, as well as emotional ambivalence about his business.

Coutts became ill in early 1961 and was diagnosed with a brain tumor. He traveled to England for medical treatment during the summer of 1961, and then returned to Los Angeles. At this point, Coutts was an extremely sick man and had reached the conclusion that it was impossible to continue his business. To add insult to injury, at this time Postal Inspectors visited Coutts regarding his materials. On June 18, 1961 Coutts wrote to Gebhard (PHGA):

My return was fortunate for about 2 days after I got here & had decided I was too bugged anyway to go on & would close the business - the Post Office arrived for an "inquiry." So I told them I was closing and why. (I could perhaps have fought it but I was too tired). I pointed out that by closing I was NOT admitting that my stuff was obscene. They were simply pushing me ahead a few weeks. So they gave me until June 30th to close the boxes & clean up.

Coutts asked for several weeks to close his business, and commented about how flexible the Postal Inspectors were in giving him this extra time. In fact, given the changing legal environment, it is likely that the only scenario that would

¹⁶⁶ Coutts letter to Gebhard, August 24, 1961 (PHGA).

have ensured success for the Postal Inspectors was one in which they intimidated Coutts into “voluntarily” closing his business. For them, Coutts’ quick and easy compliance was ideal. On June 12, 1961, Coutts sent a letter to his customers announcing that he would close his business as of June 25th. Conscientious to the end, he wrote:¹⁶⁷

I would like to inform you that on that date everything, but everything, including the mailing list, will be destroyed. I have had, as you probably realize, many attractive offers for the mailing list, but as you have placed your confidence in me, and I am what I am, these offers have always been turned down. And now this is the end.

It’s been nice to have known you and I wish you the very best in your games of fun and nonsense.”

Coutts spent several weeks at the UCLA medical center, where he was unsuccessfully treated. He lived with a friend in Arizona for several months in late 1961, where the JASC interview was recorded (Dec. 1961-Jan. 1962). In early 1962 Coutts returned to Britain where he stayed with family members. His condition worsened, and Coutts died in his sleep during the morning of August 5, 1962.

Coutts was a very important innovator and producer in the American Fetish style, as well as a very unusual individual. His work influenced the imagination and products of succeeding generations of producers and practitioners in the American Fetish style—although it is far from clear how Coutts himself would react to the late twentieth-century pervasiveness of the imagery that he helped to introduce in American Culture. Consultant Yogi Klein expresses an opinion that might well be true in this hypothetical case: “If he was alive today he’d be so happy. I mean, we live in a John Willie...we live in a bizarre world!”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Coutts letter to his customers, June 12, 1961 (KIRSGR).

¹⁶⁸ Bienvenu interview with Klein, January 27, 1996.

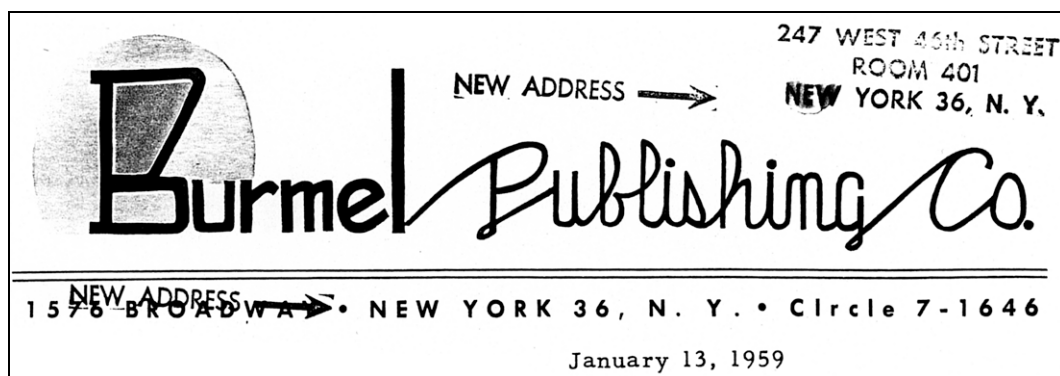


Figure 104: Burtman and Himmel—Burmel letterhead, 1959 (RB)

4.33 Leonard Burtman and Associates

Among the important producers of the American Fetish style were Leonard “Lennie” Burtman (b. 1921) and his associates. On a number of measures, Burtman, who was active as a publisher from 1954 through the 1980’s, could be considered the father of the modern fetish publishing industry. The scale of Burtman’s enterprises was larger than that of any of his predecessors, including Klaw. Whereas Guyette, Klaw, and Coutts distributed their own material, Burtman was the first American Fetish publisher to employ a professional, nationwide distribution network for his materials. Available evidence also indicates that Burtman was the first major American Fetish publisher to be supported by significant external sources of funding, which financed Burtman’s various enterprises as a capital investment. Burtman’s operation was also thoroughly professional in its engagement of the legal environment. Burtman maintained continuous, highly skilled legal counsel, who directly monitored products for compliance with current obscenity standards and successfully navigated his businesses through a variety of attacks and legal perils. Although subjected to more legal assaults than any of the producers discussed thus far, Burtman never had a sustained conviction on an obscenity charge.

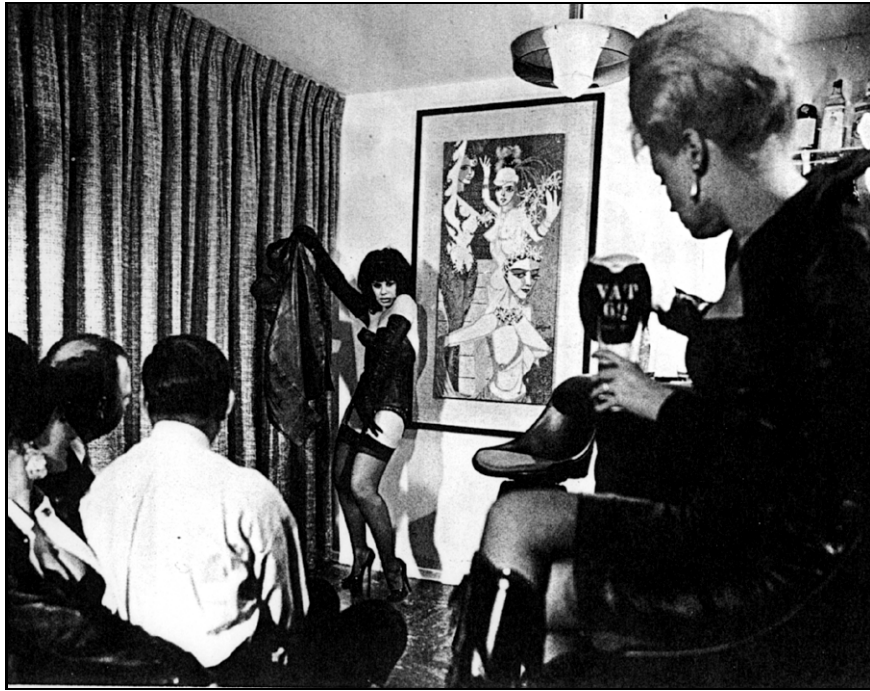


Figure 105: Scene from a “bizarre party.” The location is Burtman's New York City apartment, c. 1965 (*Bizarre Life* #2; PC)

Like Coutts and Guyette, and unlike Klaw and other publishers in the American Fetish style (discussed below), Burtman was a publisher who was also socially linked to practitioner networks. Burtman was the second American publisher (following Coutts) whose work explicitly articulates an aesthetic of bizarre in the context of a “bizarre” lifestyle. The bizarre lifestyle was actively, albeit for the most part clandestinely, lived by a loosely organized social circle of connoisseurs and practitioners centered around Burtman.¹⁶⁹ Members of

¹⁶⁹ Yogi Klein has made reference to Burtman's “fetish empire.” In the history of the American Fetish style, there is probably no early figure better suited for an interesting film or non-fiction narrative.

From the late 1950's to the mid-1960's, Klein, a cousin of Burtman, regularly traveled to New York City. While there he worked at Burtman's offices and was a guest at his home. Thus, much of Klein's information is based on direct interaction and conversations with Burtman, held over a period of years. Interestingly, I met Yogi through Chuck Renslow in Chicago—at the time Yogi was an associate with Eagle Leathers, one of Renslow's businesses. I return to both Klein and Renslow below.

this group included well-known exotic dancers, professional dominatrices, female impersonators and transsexuals, and private practitioners including Greg Day and his practitioner social circle (discussed above, p. 98). Common interests included fetishistic attire and the creative exploration of various forms of non-conventional and kinky sexuality. The composition and interests of this group are reflected in many of Burtman's products, which are the focus of the next section.

Burtman also had extensive connections with other (contemporary and former) producers of fetishistic and sadomasochistic erotica in the New York area. These included Charles Guyette, Robert Harrison, Irving Klaw, Eddie Mishkin and Moe Shapiro (discussed below), and John Coutts.¹⁷⁰

Burtman was born in Nebraska in 1921, and lived in California from 1941 to 1950, where he worked in the electronics industry. During this period he received training at the Philco School, Bell Laboratories, and the California Institute of Technology, and worked for a private firm involved in government contracts. In 1949 Burtman got into legal difficulties involving the transportation of false securities in interstate commerce, and was given a suspended prison sentence. Evidently following this episode, in 1950 he moved to New York and began a new career. In addition to flying and race car driving, one of Burtman's hobbies was photography. In New York he began to work professionally as a free-lance photographer, and made his way into the fetish and cheesecake business. Yogi Klein indicates that Burtman worked as a

¹⁷⁰ Burtman was loathed by John Coutts who, for reasons that are not clear, believed that Burtman had burglarized his office and stolen material from him. I have encountered no evidence in any material published by Burtman that he stole material from Coutts. Consultant Yogi Klein, who eventually arranged a reconciliation between Burtman and Coutts' friends who were members of Greg Day's social circle, is absolutely convinced that Coutts' belief was unfounded.

photographer for Irving Klaw during the early 1950's.¹⁷¹ He may have also worked as a photographer for Robert Harrison, and may have edited some issues of the Harrison cheesecake publications.¹⁷² Whatever the configuration of employers, drawing from his freelance work experience in New York City in the early 1950's, in 1954 Burtman began his own fetish publishing enterprise.

Burtman's business partner from 1954 through 1970 was Benedict "Ben" Himmel. Himmel was born c. 1917, the youngest child of four in a family of Austrian immigrants. He was raised in Bensonhurst in Brooklyn, and was involved in a variety of businesses in the New York area—from 1939 to 1951 as a partner with his father in "a number of bar operations." He was also a union organizer for several years.¹⁷³ It is unclear how Burtman and Himmel

¹⁷¹ Bienvenu interview with Klein, January 27, 1996. Despite some effort (see Bienvenu 1997), I have not been able to directly corroborate this account with other sources or documentary evidence. I have encountered no evidence to the contrary. Based on Burtman's documented professional relationships (at the very beginning of his career as a publisher) with individuals closely associated with Klaw, such as the artists Stanton and Bilbrew, as well as fetish model Bettie Page, my sense is that an early Burtman-Klaw relationship is both plausible and likely.

¹⁷² Burtman's publications reflect many conventions of the cheesecake genre as found in Robert Harrison's magazines; e.g., in posing, captions, and page layout. Institute for Sex Research fieldworkers documented professional interactions between Harrison and Burtman as of 1958 (see "*Exotique Magazine*" fieldnote, KIRSGR vertical file: *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S., 20th c.)—BURMEL*). However, the evidentiary basis for a claim of a Burtman-Harrison relationship during the early 1950's is more weak than that for a Burtman-Klaw relationship.

Clearly, more research is required on this issue. Some suggestive data have been compiled by Yogi Klein. With few exceptions, Burtman used pseudonyms in publications that were variants of "L.B."; for example, he lists himself as "Leon Brenner" in *Exotica* (1954), and as "Leonard Burton" in the credits of his film *Satan in High Heels* (1960). Klein has noted issues of the Harrison publications that list editors with such variants of "L.B.," and that—on stylistic grounds—he believes were edited by Burtman.

¹⁷³ Some of the preceding biographical information on Burtman and Himmel is drawn from *U.S. v. Leonard Burtman and Benedict Himmel*, 69 Cr. 435, January 28, 1970, p. 26-27 (RB—HML). This is a transcript of the sentencing of Burtman and Himmel after conviction on a smuggling charge. Both received sentences of one year. The delivery of sentence was preceded by a ritual review of the biography of both men.

came to be associated, but the two shared corporate officer positions in the variety of corporations that they jointly operated from 1954 to 1970 (ibid.) Whereas Burtman was the creative force behind the enterprise, Himmel was primarily involved in the distribution and financial components of the business. Yogi Klein recalled the following about Ben Himmel:¹⁷⁴

Nicest guy. I believe from everything that I've heard that Ben Himmel was in effect, just like unions have agents, Ben Himmel was the agent of the people that funded Lennie's companies. Most of the money came from sources where there was no real known source of money. There were all kinds of rumors: that it was gambling money, that it was white slavery money, that it was dope money, that it was the New York Mafia and gangsters. Benny was the only one that I ever knew. Benny was a big, rough, tough, New Yorker, and every once in a while he'd say [imitating a loud, gruff voice]: "Lennie!!!" [...] here around Chicago we call him one of the boys, or the outfit. And I believe that they put him in the office to keep an eye on things, to protect their investment.

A third Burtman associate highlighted in the public record is Seymour Grasberg. Little is known about Mr. Grasberg, other than that he started as an employee of Burtman and circa 1959 became the President of Kaysey Sales, one of Burtman's businesses and the immediate successor to Burmel. According to a Kinsey field note, ownership of *Exotique* was transferred to Grasberg as a condition of a suspended sentence on a New York state obscenity conviction in 1959.¹⁷⁵ However, Burtman and Himmel remained the

This public-record document and many others referenced in this section were obtained from Mr. Herbert Monte-Levy. In January 1997, Mr. Levy, attorney for Burtman and associates from 1959 to the early 1970's, generously retrieved germane files from storage and spent two days reviewing them with me at his office in New York City. Mr. Levy examined each document in several boxes of archived files, and allowed me to review and duplicate those that are not confidential. The several hundred pages of legal documents and correspondence that emerged from these sessions are a rich and unique historical resource. These documents will eventually be deposited at the Kinsey Institute—future scholars of fetishism will owe a great debt to Mr. Levy. Documents obtained from Mr. Levy I shall note, as above, with "RB—HML."

¹⁷⁴ Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, January 27, 1996.

¹⁷⁵ See handwritten note "Burmel Publishing Co." KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

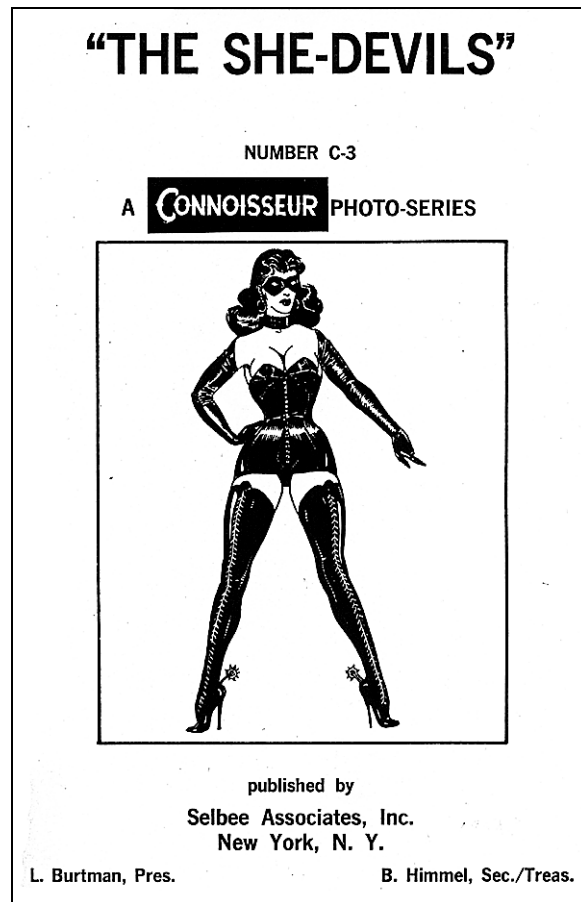


Figure 106: The hard-media dominatrix is one staple image in Burtman's publications. The cover of this particular issue has the unusual citation of Burtman and Himmel's actual names. c. 1962 (PC)

principals in the operation. This was recognized by law enforcement authorities who shortly thereafter prosecuted Grasberg as president of Kaysey Sales:

it is suspect by the Federal authorities that Grasberg—being fair to Grasberg, is probably a front to this Burmel concern, backed up by Burton and Hemil.¹⁷⁶

The 1959 case was *People of the State of New York v. Benedict Himmel and Leonard Burtman*, tried on April 6, 1959 (see Monte-Levy letter to Gebhard, December 6, 1961; KIRSGR).

¹⁷⁶ *People of the State of New York v. Seymour Grasberg*, Record on Appeal (1960), p. 51 (KIRSGR library). The names of Burtman and Himmel are misspelled, with several variations, in court documents from this case.



Figure 107: Stanton caricature of Lennie Burtman at work, c. 1958 (PC)

Grasberg was duly defended by Burtman's legal counsel, and remained an associate of Burtman and Himmel through the late 1960's.

Although a lesser figure as an artist than Coutts, Burtman was a creative talent and stylistic innovator in the field who was a prolific photographer and writer. Burtman was also a man driven in his profession—his cousin Yogi recalls (Bienvenu 1997):

He was totally, completely immersed in publishing. He would find, I mean, between correspondence and writing, he did most of this writing himself, physically did his own typing, took his own pictures, he was his own promotion department. The only person that you ever hear of along with Lennie is Ben. Ben Himmel. But Ben never did any work. Ben was just there. Lennie did it all. Even when we would go out to dinner, he'd be sitting there, he'd be making notes on a pad. He's got an idea, he says, "You know, I've got a different angle." And Tana [one of Burtman's wives, who was also a fetish model] sometimes would holler at him. She says, "Lennie can't you ever turn your mind off, can't you ever stop?" He'd say, "Well, yea, I'm...what did you say? I didn't..." She's hollering and he didn't even hear her hollering at him. He was just like, in his brain. And it also seemed to me that I always picture him well dressed, almost always wore a suit and always seemed to have some kind of a camera bag.

This intensity facilitated Burtman's prodigious output. In the next section I provide a descriptive overview of Burtman products from 1954 to 1971 (§ 4.331). This is followed by an analysis of structural conditions that affected the content and development of American Fetish material contained in Burtman and associates' work (§ 4.332).



Figure 108: From "Forced Femininity," a 1963 Selbee publication, illustrated by Gene Bilbrew. Female domination and female impersonation (with clear allusions to transsexualism) were common themes in Burtman publications of the late 1950's and 1960's. "Forced Femininity" combines both. In this story, "Domneeta" turns out to be a female impersonator. (PC)

E X O T I Q U E

**. dedicated to FASHIONS,
FADS and FANCIES**

No. 1

Figure 109: In the tradition of *London Life* (see page 51 above)—
from the titlepage of *Exotique* #1 (1955) (PC)

4.331 An overview of Burtman products: 1954-1971.

Burtman began operation as an independent producer in 1954, and quickly built a business with a diverse product line and nationwide distribution. Providing an indication of the nature and scale of Burtman's business in the late 1950's, an itemized inventory of material seized by federal officers from Burtman and Himmel's offices on April 7, 1959 included "167,000 pictures of nude and semi-nude models," "58,900 books and booklets," "27,000 stuffed mailing envelopes," a mailing list filed on "17,000 x3x5 cards," 230 signed model release forms, as well as over 1,600 reels of film.¹⁷⁷ These reflect key categories of Burtman products during the period of this dissertation: (1) magazine and booklet style publications; (2) photo-sets and films, and (3) correspondence-contact services. I provide a descriptive overview of each below, followed by a discussion of the social context of production underlying these products.

¹⁷⁷ "Inventory - Material removed from 247 West 46th Street" on April 7, 1959. Document associated with *U.S. v. 247 W. 46th Street, New York, NY, and the film room on the fifth floor to the right of the elevator, owned or leased by Ben Himmel and Pigalle Imports*. U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, C. 158-259 (RB—HML).

Magazine and booklet style publications

Burtman's first publication was issued in 1954: a digest-sized, extravagantly priced (\$5.00) magazine titled *Exotica*. Only a single issue of *Exotica* was published. *Exotica* was immediately followed by *Exotique*, which was published by Burtman and Himmel's *Burmel* Publishing Company. *Exotique* ran for 36 issues from 1955 to 1959. *Exotique* was distributed nationwide and was one of the key fetish publications of the late 1950's. In 1959 the Burmel Publishing Company was closed following an obscenity conviction (later reversed), and ownership of *Exotique* was transferred to Kaysey Sales, under president Seymour Grasberg. The magazine continued with issues #37 and 38 (1959) under the title *New Exotique*, published by Kaysey. Grasberg became embroiled in legal difficulties in 1959, and in 1960 the magazine, under Burtman and Himmel's new company Selbee Associates, became *Masque* magazine.¹⁷⁸ Approximately four issues of *Masque* were published, and the magazine was discontinued by December 1961.¹⁷⁹

In 1957 Burmel began to differentiate its product line with a number of digest-sized booklets, published in series and

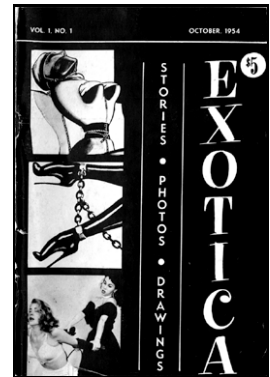


Figure 110: *Exotica*, Burtman's first publication, 1954 (GK)



Figure 111: Cover of *Exotique* #1, "A new magazine of the bizarre and the unusual," published in 1955 by Burmel Publishing Company (KIRSGR)

¹⁷⁸ On *Masque* being the successor to *Exotique*, see Burtman letter to Gebhard, December 22, 1960 (PHGA). The New York state Certificate of Incorporation of Selbee Associates, Inc. is dated July 13, 1960 (RB—HML).

¹⁷⁹ In a December 13, 1961 letter to Paul Gebhard (PHGA), Burtman lists eight current publications, under yet another corporate title: Vega Productions. *Masque* is not among them. The eight were: *Paris-Taboo*, *Diabolique*, *Orbit*, *Pepper*, *High Heels*, *Nocturne*, *Striparama*, and *Exotica* (a title resurrected).

in single-issues, that addressed a variety of topics. An example is a series of topical “*Exotique*” publications, such as the *Exotique Photo Album*, which contained only photographs with no text, and *Exotique Correspondence Digest*, which contained letters addressed to *Exotique* magazine. Burmel and succeeding companies also published original digest-size novelettes, which are reminiscent of French publications of the 1930’s. An example is *Bizarre Desires*, published in 1958, which was described in Burmel ephemera as follows:

“BIZARRE DESIRES” an *Exotique* novelette by Edith Reynolds and illustrated by the incomparable ENEG.¹⁸⁰ 112 pages of strange and bizarre reading that will leave you breathless. The amazing story of Marie Corbet and the weird and unnatural experiences that befall her at the hands of Vicki Fletcher. Vicki, cruel and dominant, takes her pleasure in many and varied forms....some of which will astound even the most-callused readers. Find out also, of Eddy Morgan who can’t quite decide which way he wants his thrills—just so long as he can assume the female “passive” role and can dress accordingly. Undoubtedly our finest effort so-far. Don’t miss this one!

Such novelettes typically contained one or two short stories, illustrated with photographs (“photo-fiction”) and/or drawings by artists Bilbrew or Stanton. Material for these novelettes was obtained from a variety of sources, including Burtman himself. Some texts were directly plagiarized from pulp terror magazines of the 1930’s, and supplemented with fetish drawing by Bilbrew or Stanton.¹⁸¹ Burtman also resold publications produced by

¹⁸⁰ “ENEG,” Gene spelled backward, was artist Gene Bilbrew’s usual pen-name.

¹⁸¹ Specific examples include the Burmel-era novelettes *Come on Girl* and *Wheel of Violence*. Both contain verbatim plagiarisms from pulp magazine stories from the mid-1930’s. The title story of *Come on Girl* was originally published as “Murder Dice” in *Spicy Detective Stories* magazine; *Wheel of*

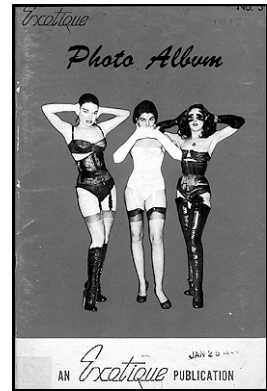


Figure 112: *Exotique Photo-Album*, Burmel, c. 1958 (fetish model Tana Louise is pictured on the left). (KIRSGR)



Figure 113: *Bizarre Desires*, Burmel, 1958 (PC)

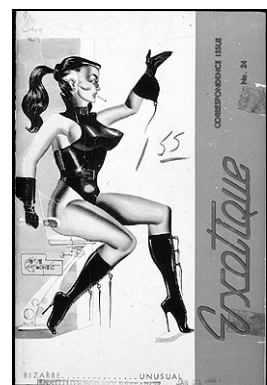


Figure 114: *Exotique Correspondence Issue*, cover illustration by Gene Bilbrew. Burmel, 1958 (KIRSGR)

others. For example, Burmel and succeeding companies were the U.S. distributor of a British fetish magazine called *Fads and Fancies*.

Most of Burtman's early publications included an eclectic mix of topics, and would include a combination of staple images or themes such as female domination, high-heeled fetishism, female impersonation, blonde and brunette models, etc.¹⁸² Underlying this diversity was a marketing strategy designed to maximize the appeal of any particular publication, by including material that addressed a variety of tastes. An example is *Bizarre Desires*, which addressed both female domination and forced feminization. Burtman's early publications also contained no advertisements.



Figure 115: *The Wheel of Violence*, "The factual history of a woman who likes her men rough and ready." The title story of this Burtman publication was plagiarized from a 1930's pulp magazine. It was found obscene in a 1959 case (later reversed). (PC)

Violence was originally "Hair of Samson" from *Spicy Adventure Stories*—both originally published in the mid-1930's. I obtained copies of both the Burtman plagiarized versions and 1930's originals from Monte-Levy. Unexceptional during the 1930's, these stories were found obscene when combined with fetishistic illustrations in *New York v. Benedict Himmel and Leonard Burtman* (1959). A third title found obscene in this case was *Virgin Come High*.

¹⁸² I highlight this point because in my initial review of Burtman's publications I noted this pattern of eclecticism, and entertained a hypothesis that proved to be false: that the variety of predilections contained in a single publication was an indication that these were less categorically distinct during the mid-century period than today. I found that Burtman conceptualized topics such as female domination, transvestism, fetishism, etc. as distinct interests during the 1950's, and intentionally combined them to increase the marketability of his products (see Bienvenu 1997). The key influence on later specialization in the pornography industry seems to be economic: the much larger and more differentiated erotica market that emerged in the late 1960's and 1970's supported distinct publications addressing particular interests (e.g., transexualism). This pattern continues today.

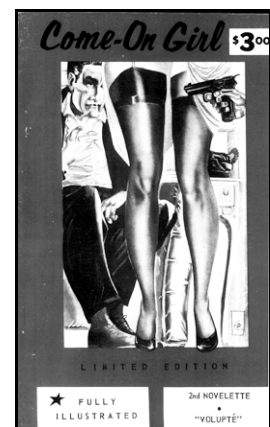


Figure 116: *Come on Girl*, Burtman publication involved in a 1959 obscenity case. The text in this novelette was also plagiarized from a 1930's pulp magazine. (PC)

In 1964 Burtman, under the corporate title S-K Publishers, issued a digest-sized magazine called *Bizarre Life*. This was evidently a single-issue. In 1966 the title appeared again as a new and recognizably different Burtman publication: Volume 1, No. 1 of *Bizarre Life*, published by Unique Publications. *Bizarre Life* cited a publisher's address in Toronto but listed its "editorial offices" at 1733 Broadway in New York City—Burtman's office. This was Burtman's first known publication in an 8.5" x 11" size format, which replaced digest-size as the standard in the pornography industry in the mid-1960's. *Bizarre Life* was a specialty magazine (covering SM and fetish) that was widely distributed along with a variety of other pornographic magazines in the late 1960's. It was Burtman's main publication from 1966 to 1971 (the closing date of this dissertation). Following *Bizarre Life*, during the 1970's and 1980's Burtman, who had moved to California following a prison sentence of several months based on a smuggling conviction in 1970, issued a number of publications under the distinctive label "Eros Gold Stripe Publications." These are not discussed here.

As a final category under the rubric of publications, Burtman also published books. "Edw." Podolsky wrote a number of pseudo-academic works published by Burtman, some of which Burtman co-authored using the pseudonym Carlson Wade. Books co-authored by Edw. Podolsky and C. Wade include titles such as *Sexual Sadism*, *Sexual Masochism*, *Erotic*



Figure 117: Cover of *Bizarre Life*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1966. *Bizarre Life* had a different size and look than Burtman's previous publications, but also displayed continuities in style with previous American Fetish material. Compare, for example, the layout of this cover page with the Harrison publications illustrated above, p. 82. (KIRSGR)

Symbolism, and Transvestism Today.¹⁸³ These were advertised and sold along with Burtman's other products.

Photo-sets and films

Like Coutts and Klaw, Burtman produced and sold photo-sets—these included photographs with cheesecake and fetishistic content, such as bizarre costumes. Burtman also produced non-fetishistic female nudes. Burtman did most of this photography work himself, and shot thousands of photos at his apartment in New York City. He also hired photographers, whom he tasked with various photo shoots—in one instance sending a photographer to Britain to shoot nudes and fetish images.¹⁸⁴ A separate company operated by Burtman and Himmel, Ben-Ley Photos, provided photo processing services.

From at least 1958 Burtman's products included 8mm fetish films. One series advertised in 1962 under the rubric "Bizarre Movies" described the content as follows: "Beautiful models display their collection of bizarre & exotic apparel." These were sold at the rate of \$8.00 for 50 foot or \$15.00 for 100 foot lengths.

In 1960 Burtman and Himmel engaged in a large and novel project that was a milestone in the history of the American Fetish style: the production of a 35mm feature film with explicit

¹⁸³ A KIRSGR vertical file note references this material: "The C. Wade listed as a co-author [...] is really L. Burtman" (see Catalog No. 62-8, KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Cent. 1960-) King Enterprises*).



Figure 118: Kaysey Sales Catalog with Bettie Page as cover model (c. 1962). Like Klaw, Burtman offered photo sets of Bettie Page in fetish costume. (PC)

bizarre content. The film was entitled *Satan in High Heels*, and is the first feature film created by subcultural producers.

Burtman wrote to Gebhard in December, 1960:¹⁸⁵

Incidentally, you might be interested in the fact that we have just completed a feature-length motion picture designed for major theatrical distribution. [...] As you can well imagine, we have injected fetichism and female domination (two very popular deviations) in the film wherever possible. For example, the leading lady's wardrobe throughout the film is of leather.

Later, Burtman updated Gebhard on the progress of the film:¹⁸⁶

Our picture: "Satan in High Heels" has been sold to Seven Arts Associated for distribution. They are one of the top motion picture companies in the world having such other films as "West Side Story", "The World of Suzy Wong", the forthcoming "Lolita" etc. So, you see, we're in good company. They plan on hitting the market with it sometime in February [...] Maybe this will elevate me out of the "pornographic" business???

Gebhard later wrote Burtman that he had seen the film in a "packed" drive-in theater in Bloomington, Indiana.¹⁸⁷

Interestingly, the film encountered minimal trouble with censors in the United States (although it was banned in Britain). *Satan in High Heels* was the first mass-distributed, popular-culture film to employ explicit American Fetish imagery.

Burtman employed many practices used in his still photography in the production of *Satan in High Heels*. As mentioned above, Burtman frequently used his apartment as a setting for fetish photo shoots (this was a means of lowering production costs). As a result, there are literally thousands of

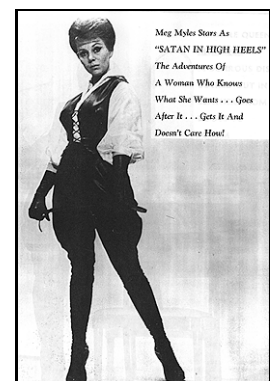


Figure 119: Meg Miles, leading lady of *Satan in High Heels* (1960), in fetish costume. Miles wears custom-ordered riding pants created by Millers, a "very exclusive equestrian shop" in New York. This was a one-time product made by special request. Millers did not want further fetish business (Bienvenu 1997). (PC)

¹⁸⁴ See "Burmel Publishing Company—Data 2/59" KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

¹⁸⁵ Burtman letter to Gebhard, December 22, 1960 (PHGA)

¹⁸⁶ Burtman letter to Gebhard, December 13, 1961 (PHGA).

classical fetish photographs in existence today that repeat backgrounds of Lennie Burtman's entry foyer, hall mirror, bar, plants, radiator, and exotic paintings. Burtman also used a standard set of props with his models—one will note, for example, the same gloves, boots, high-heeled shoes, and fetish costumes, being worn by a variety of models.

Burtman's apartment was also a key set used in *Satan in High Heels*, as were external shots of his apartment building. Burtman's friends were used as extras in the film, and Burtman himself made a cameo appearance in the first part of the film. His collection of bizarre costumes and props also appears in the film.

As an interesting aside, not all of Burtman attempts to market fetish imagery to a popular audience succeeded. One of his ideas, articulated to Institute for Sex Research fieldworkers in 1960, was to “open a night club with the waitresses in SM and fetish costumes.”¹⁸⁸ This plan was frustrated by the City of New York, which refused to approve licenses for the business. In this concept Burtman was well ahead of his time. “La Nouvelle Justine,” a restaurant with an SM theme, including dungeon decor and staff dressed in fetish outfits, recently opened in New York City.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Gebhard letter to Burtman, March 30, 1963 (PHGA).

¹⁸⁸ “Burmel Publishing Company” January 1960 fieldnotes. KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)*—BURMEL.

¹⁸⁹ La Nouvelle Justine is located at 206 W. 23rd Street, New York City.

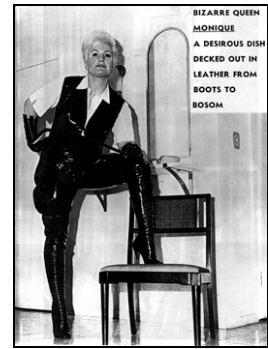


Figure 121: “Bizarre Queen Monique — a desirous dish decked out in leather from boots to bosom.” Famous dominatrix Monique Von Cleef, in a cheesecake-style layout, wearing one of Burtman's stock costumes. The photo was taken in Burtman's NYC apartment., c. 1965. (PC)



Figure 120: Bettie Page photographed in front of the bar in Lennie Burtman's NYC apartment (PC)

Correspondence-contact services

A final product category to be reviewed is contact services. I highlight this as a separate category because of the historical importance of contact advertisements in the kinky world. Prior to the advent of public SM-fetish support groups in the early 1970's, and later forums such as clubs and the world-wide-web of the 1990's, contact advertisements were a primary medium through which kinky heterosexuals met each other. Contact advertisements also played a role in the Gay Leather style, but, as discussed in chapter five below, early leathermen developed an institutional infrastructure that facilitated face-to-face contacts during the 1950's. This institutional framework of bars and clubs had no analogue in the social networks of the heterosexually-oriented American Fetish style.

Following the lead of *La Plume*, the first specialized American Fetish contact publication, in the early 1960's Burtman created the "*Exotique* Correspondence Club." The "Club" published a \$2.00 contact pamphlet called *Exotica*, which contained a number of personal ads. These ads were typically composed of a photograph and accompanying text, with a code number to be used by respondents. Individuals wishing to contact the person described in the advertisement would forward a letter in an unsealed envelope with the code number written on the lower-right hand corner of the envelope, with a forwarding fee of \$2.00 for the first letter, and \$1.00 for additional letters.



Figure 122: *La Plume*, the premier American Fetish contact tabloid. Published by Moe Shapiro (discussed below) (KIRSGR)

These would be forwarded by the “correspondence club” to the intended recipient.

According to Yogi Klein, who provided “realistic” looking photos for Burtman’s contact ads, approximately “98%” of these personal advertisements were “house ads”—i.e. fictitious.¹⁹⁰ This was a lucrative if fraudulent business; as Klein pointed out, “let me tell you something, getting letters to fictitious people is pure profit” (Bienvenu 1997). Some advertisements were authentic, however. In the case of real females placing ads for themselves, most were professionals. An example is the “Baroness” Monique Von Cleef, a professional dominatrix who was a member of Burtman’s social circle (pictured above, Figure 121, p. 182). Von Cleef became infamous in December 1965 when her home/dungeon was raided by police in a widely publicized case that was the first SM sex scandal in the United States.¹⁹¹ Prior to this, however, some of her clients were found through contact ads in Burtman’s publications.



Figure 123: A real contact ad, from *Bizarre Life* vol. 1, no. 1 (1966). This woman, a professional dominatrix in New York, was well connected in “bizarre” social circles. (PC)

¹⁹⁰ Bienvenu interview with Klein, January 27, 1997.

¹⁹¹ The case, which was initiated by a Postal Inspector, evoked rabid media attention. For months, newspapers fixated on lurid details of Von Cleef’s “House of Horrors.” Certain features of the case reporters found irresistible, such as the fact that Von Cleef is a Germanic blonde, and that her clients included many (unnamed) powerful and famous men. Newspapers also found irresistible the temptation to generate endless bad puns. Examples include the following headlines: “Blonde Disciplinarian Beats Vice Rap,” “Monique Sentenced for Makin’ Whipped,” “Court Cracks Its Own Whip, Rules for Pain-for-Pay Gal,” “They’d Deport Monique, the Whipperoozy.” Von Cleef made a loud appearance in Burtman’s New York City office shortly after she arrived in the United States from the Netherlands. When arrested in 1965, she was initially represented by Burtman’s attorney Herbert Monte-Levy (see Bienvenu 1997; Von Cleef and Waterman 1973, p. 161; KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Prostitution—Cleef, Monique Von*; Herbert Monte-Levy letters to Paul Gebhard, December 28, 1965, January 24, 1966, and February 21, 1966; PHGA).

4.332 Burtman: Social context of production and the production of style.

Stylistic antecedents and social networks

Key imagery in Burtman publications through 1971 included hard-media fetishism, which was a component of virtually all of his material, female domination (of both men and women), transvestism, fighting girls, and exotic dancers. Fetishized bondage is found in Burtman's work, but is far less common than in Klaw's publications. Both the term "bizarre" and the aesthetic of bizarre are reflected in Burtman's work, which displays clear continuities with precedents in the European Fetish and early American Fetish tradition. The content of his publications also reflects the composition of the social network of bizarre practitioners with whom Burtman was professionally and socially connected.

More specifically, Burtman's early publications integrated a number of stylistic antecedents available at the time. For example, the title page of the first issue of *Exotique* clearly shows the influence of *London Life* and other precedents, such as *Bizarre* magazine. The subtitle of *Exotique*, "dedicated to Fashions, Fads, and Fancies" is a phrase, and indicates an editorial orientation, directly descendent from the British publications discussed in chapter two above. Although less sophisticated than Coutts' work, the format of the publication followed many conventions found in *Bizarre* magazine, including the layout of the title page itself. However, whereas *Bizarre* was mostly non-fiction in orientation, *Exotique*

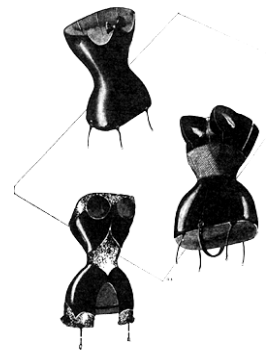


Figure 124:
Disembodied fetish
garb—Bilbrew
illustration in the
style of Carlo (see
Figure 42, page 63
above). From
Exotique #1 (1955), p.
5 (PC)

contained fiction articles in the style of earlier British works such as *London Life* and *Photo Bits*.

The content of early Burtman publications also reflects relationships developed with existing producers in the American Fetish style, such as Irving Klaw. Early issues contain drawings by Gene Bilbrew, as well as photos of fetish model Bettie Page, whom Burtman extensively photographed.¹⁹² Both were also employees of Klaw. Both Stanton and Bilbrew—as discussed above, artists originally discovered by Klaw—were to become key artists for Burtman’s publications. (Presumably, Burtman met both artists through Klaw.) This relationship continued after Klaw dropped out of the fetish business. Charles Guyette, whom Burtman knew, also enters the mix of direct influences. Although not attributed, several fetish photographs in the first issues of *Exotique* are 1930’s images produced by Charles Guyette.¹⁹³

Lynda in Leather, published circa 1963, was one of the first Burtman publications to focus basically on a single topic: the various fetish outfits modeled by the “exotic Lynda.”¹⁹⁴



Figure 125: *Exotique* #4 (c. 1955). Cover illustration by Gene Bilbrew (PC)

¹⁹² Bettie Page quit modeling and left New York City in December, 1957 (Essex and Swanson 1996, p. 223). Prior to this, hundreds if not thousands of Bettie Page photographs were taken by Burtman. Most of these photos can be identified with absolute certainty: they were taken in Burtman’s New York City apartment, where consultant Yogi Klein later stayed as a house guest, or other locations that Klein personally visited. Distinctive features of this apartment are reviewed in Bienvenu 1997.

¹⁹³ See, e.g., *Exotique* #1, p. 29.

¹⁹⁴ This single-issue—single-topic concept, which Burtman initially resisted in the case of *Lynda in Leather* (see Bienvenu 1997), was well established in the works of Irving Klaw by 1963. Many examples of single issue-single topic publications are found among the NUTRIX booklets.

Lynda in Leather also illustrates continuities in the social network underlying SM erotica production. The boots worn by the cover model, which I myself had an opportunity to examine in Chicago in 1996, are kangaroo skin boots made in Australia. They were once owned by John Coutts, and appear in Coutts' photographs from the late 1930's in Australia. These photos appeared later in *Bizarre* magazine. These boots were obtained by Yogi Klein from John Coutts' friend Greg Day, who had a box of materials, including these boots, left by Coutts when he moved to California in 1957. This transfer occurred when Klein and his wife stayed with Day as a house guest in 1960.¹⁹⁵ The red leather smoker's jacket pictured has subsequently appeared in a number of SM subcultural publications, the most recent in 1996. Today, it is owned by a dominatrix in Ohio.

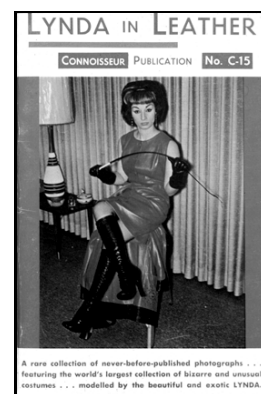


Figure 126: *Lynda in Leather*, Burtman Selbee publication, c. 1963. Fetish clothing items pictured here have a subcultural history extending from the 1930's to the 1990's. Photographs are by Yogi Klein (KIRSGR).

The supporting external economy

Costumes such as those worn by the “exotic Lynda” were an indispensable component of the American Fetish images produced and marketed by Burtman. A handful of artisans produced the fetish footwear and costumes that appear in Burtman's publications—these skilled craftspersons constituted a central part of the external economy supporting the American Fetish style. As noted above, prior to the development of mass marketed fetishistic clothing during the 1960's, which was

¹⁹⁵ Further illustrating the network, Klein, who is a lifelong Chicago resident, met Greg Day through John Bringman, Coutts' friend in Chicago. Klein met Bringman through a mutual fetishist acquaintance in Chicago (Bienvenu 1997).



Figure 127: Avila letterhead, 1960. Avila was a well-known leather craftsman, one of a handful of sources for bizarre costumes and paraphernalia during the 1950's and early 1960's. (PC)

modeled on the work of these earlier subcultural artisans, fetish costumes were rare, relatively expensive, and custom-made. With very few exceptions, fetishistic costume production overlapped with closely related markets, such as burlesque and equestrian supplies. The specific craftspersons who produced specialized fetish costumes tended to have more mainstream businesses and clientele, and to produce fetish material on the side—often secretly.

If for no other reason than professional necessity, Burtman was well connected with these artisans of the bizarre. Institute for Sex Research fieldworkers noted that in the early years of his business, Charles Guyette was a key source of fetish costumes used by Burtman.¹⁹⁶ A handful of other craftsmen were well known among the small network of American Fetish practitioners of the 1950's and early 1960's. One noted producer was Victor, who made conventional and fetish shoes in the New York area. Victor was the primary supplier to private practitioner Greg Day, who had an impressive collection of fetish

¹⁹⁶ See "Burmel data, July 1961" KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

boots and gear. A second is Rex, who produced burlesque paraphernalia and, “under duress,” would make customized fetish costumes (cf. Bienvenu 1997). During the 1960’s foreign suppliers provided some of Burtman’s material. An example is Anello & Davide, British craftsmen who were reportedly “the Queen’s commissioned boot maker, as well as the shoemaker for the British Royal Ballet.”¹⁹⁷ In a fetishistic mode, Anello & Davide crafted high-heeled and thigh-high boots. In addition to appearances in Burtman’s fetish publications, during the 1960’s Anello & Davide fetish boots were among the costumes worn on the British TV series, “The Avengers.” Another noteworthy foreign supplier was Avila of Guadalajara, Mexico, who crafted fetish gloves, footwear, and leather bondage equipment. Avila was a dentist who crafted fetish goods as a hobby/second business. Burtman used fetish costumes created by each of these craftspersons.



Figure 128: Jutka Goz (her real name), who later became Jennifer Jordan. Ms. Goz and Burtman married in the mid-1960's. Prior to becoming a prominent fetish persona, Ms. Goz was a beauty queen who held the "Miss Free Hungary" title. From *Bizarre Life* vol. 1, no. 5, Spring 1968 (PC)

¹⁹⁷ See Bienvenu 1997; Gemini-Klein Catalog, 1997 (GK; KIRSGR).

Distribution Systems

Burtman and associates produced thousands of individual items, ranging from magazines to photographs, each year between 1954 and 1970. To sell this merchandise effectively, Burtman's various enterprises employed multiple distributions systems, working both through the mail and through professional distributors. The only distribution mode discussed in previous cases that was not used by Burtman was retail—Burtman never developed a direct retail outlet.

Like Klaw and Coutts, Burtman used mail order to sell his products. He sent out mass mailings of ephemera describing his products, and developed a mailing list numbering in the tens of thousands. By the mid-1960's, the mail-order component of Burtman's businesses had developed to a point that he sold mailing lists to other dealers. In 1966 Kaysey Sales offered "two specialized mailing lists, one of adult book buyers and the other of adult photo, magazine and nudist buyers" at a price schedule ranging from \$40.00 to \$25.00 per thousand.¹⁹⁸ This postal activity brought Burtman's enterprises under the purview of U.S.C. Title 18, Section 1461, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

As a primary distribution channel, however, Burtman employed professional distributors who dealt in erotica. These companies not only distributed erotica, they also served as gatekeepers to chains of adult retail outlets that were otherwise closed. During the 1950's and 1960's three known major distributors were used by Burtman. One was Acme News, a New York based company that continues to exist today and is called Star Distributors. Providing an indication of scale, Acme News ordered publications from

¹⁹⁸ August 13, 1966 letter from Kaysey Sales to Trojan Book Service, KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

Burtman, by contract, in minimum quantities of 35,000 copies of each issue.¹⁹⁹ A second distributor was All States in Chicago. Finally, during the mid-1960's, Reuben Sturman of Cleveland, Ohio became Burtman's primary distributor. Because these distributors shipped merchandise by interstate freight, they fell under the jurisdiction of the FBI, which was charged with enforcement of U.S.C. Title 18, Section 1462. Burtman's corporations also shipped merchandise via freight directly, an activity under the jurisdiction of the FBI.

In *Art Worlds*, Becker notes the influence of distribution systems on the content of artistic products (see p. 24 above). The relationship between economics, distribution systems, and style is clear in the case of Burtman's publications. Available evidence indicates that during the 1950's and early 1960's, Burtman (like Coutts) exercised a relatively high degree of creative control over the content of his products. He dealt, through Ben Himmel, with a number of distributors who purchased and resold finished products from him. At this time Burtman's various distributors had, it seems, only an indirect influence on his products. The key constraint experienced by both Burtman and distributors was legal—to remain within the boundaries of current obscenity law enforcement standards. As illustrated in the discussion of Klaw above, this was a significant constraint.

During the mid-1960's, Burtman and Himmel experienced severe financial difficulties. These problems produced changes in Burtman's economic situation and primary distributors—all of which had an impact on his professional autonomy and the content of his products. These financial difficulties were associated with the collapse of All States, Burtman's distributor

¹⁹⁹ "Memorandum of modification of agreement between Acme News Co., Inc. and Selbee Associates, Inc.," September 1963 (RB—HML).

located in Chicago, which owed Burtman money. Attorney Monte-Levy stated in 1970:²⁰⁰

approximately five years ago the exclusive distributing company for I think it was Selbee at that time, went into bankruptcy, just after we had gotten \$100,000 judgment against them with another \$80,000 claim unliquidated. [...] I do think it important to note that there was \$180,000 lost by the company a few years ago which certainly imposed a severe financial problem.

After this financial crisis, which occurred circa 1965, Burtman was evidently supported (or bailed-out) by Reuben Sturman, a contemporary giant in erotica publishing and distribution. In a recent article Sturman, who today is in federal prison on tax evasion charges, was described as “The Bill Gates of Porn.” Investigative reporter Eric Schlosser wrote (Schlosser 1997, p. 51; italics in original):

Although Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt are household names, the man who played a far more pivotal role in developing the American sex industry has remained largely unknown to the public. Until a few years ago, a secretive Cleveland businessman named Reuben Sturman dominated the production and distribution of porn not only in the United States but also throughout most of the world. A business rival once complained that Sturman did not simply control the adult-entertainment industry; he *was* the industry. [...] By the end of the 1960's, Sturman was one of the largest publishers, and perhaps the largest distributor, of sex magazines.

Burtman's cousin Yogi Klein recalled that Sturman became the primary distributor for Burtman's products following the All States crisis, and perhaps Burtman's key financial supporter. Klein noted that following the Selbee financial crisis:²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ U.S. v. Leonard Burtman and Benedict Himmel , 69 Cr. 435, January 28, 1970, p. 31-32 (RB—HML). Yogi Klein specifies the firm as All States (Bienvenu interview with Klein, January 27, 1996).

²⁰¹ Bienvenu interview with Klein, January 27, 1996.

At that time, there was another major distributor out of Cleveland. I never met them but I would hear the name "Reuben." Reuben controlled an awful lot of stuff. Reuben helped Lennie out, because he knew him. But Reuben probably at that time became the controlling interest. And it no longer was as independent as it was when he was dealing with a few New Yorkers and they were in New York, etc.. I began to sense that the flexibility that he had was less and less. And what he produced was more uniform. The title of the book may be different, but it was just the same. And then he began using old material over and over again. Change the cover, sell the same thing.

The mid-1960's transition in economic conditions and distributors likely marked the beginning of Leonard Burtman's second career as a pornographer (in the sense defined above, page 116). Although clearly there are continuities in style, the conventions of *Bizarre Life* are different from Burtman's earlier publications. For example, in addition to the uniformity and lack of innovation noted by Klein, *Bizarre Life* was 8.5"x11" rather than digest size, it was published in color on glossy paper, placed much greater emphasis on visual rather than textual content, and contained nudity and explicit SM imagery involving men and women together. It is very likely no coincidence that this transition occurred after Burtman came under the influence of Sturman's operation. These changes, particularly in publishing conventions, brought Burtman's products into line with conventions that were emerging in the pornography industry in the mid and late 1960's. These conventions today characterize the "low end" of the fetish (and general) pornography industry.²⁰² Paradoxically, in its movement toward the pornographers' methodology of

²⁰² The "low end" of the heterosexually-oriented SM-fetish erotica industry today includes magazines sold through pornography channels (i.e., adult book stores and mail order) such as *Wicked Women*, *Painful Pleasures*, *Feminine Illusion*, and *Fetish World*. The "high-end" includes a group of more recent magazines that are editorially and artistically much more sophisticated, and that are also marketed in mainstream outlets. These include magazines such as *Skin Two*, *"O"* and *Secret*. Such "high end" publications display much closer affinities to antecedents such as Coutts' *Bizarre*—and tend to be produced by and oriented toward practitioners.

endless repetition of aesthetically blunt content, *Bizarre Life* was likely Burtman's final gasp of innovation in the American Fetish Style. Here the innovation is one of anti-innovation—the establishment of formulaic repetition as a representational paradigm in fetishistic and SM erotica. By the mid-1970's, the legacy of *London Life*, Yva Richard, etc. was almost unrecognizable in the cheesy pornography then dominant in the American Fetish tradition. Changes in economic conditions surrounding erotica publishing and associated distribution systems played an important role in this transition.

The Legal Environment

The distribution systems used by Burtman and associates brought them within the jurisdictions of the full spectrum of police agencies. This included the FBI, the Postal Inspection Service, and various state and local law enforcement agencies. The scale and nature of Burtman's operation also, inevitably, attracted the attention of moral entrepreneurs—who specifically targeted Burtman's businesses. The basic parameters of the legal environment applicable to Burtman and associates have been outlined above, and through 1964 are basically the same as those described above in the case of Irving Klaw. In order to avoid redundancy of points established in my analysis of the Klaw case, here I provide a concise review of Burtman and associates' legal difficulties through 1970. I focus on the role of fetishistic content in prosecutions of Burtman and associates.

By way of initial overview, Leonard Burtman, Ben Himmel, and Seymour Grasberg were each cited, in some cases individually and in others together, as defendants in legal cases from 1958 to 1970. These cases came in

three key periods: 1958-59, 1963-64, and 1969-70. Between 1958 and 1964, Burtman and associates were involved in five separate, but related, cases.²⁰³ All five cases were eventually dismissed or had convictions reversed at the appellate level. A final case began with a 1969 indictment and concluded in 1970 with convictions for Burtman and Himmel. Appeals failed, and commencing on April 12, 1971, both served several months of a one-year sentence in the federal penitentiary. This final case involved an attempt to import pornographic magazines from Denmark in cartons inaccurately labeled “cups and saucers.” However, the issue in this case was not obscenity, but “conspiracy to defraud the United States by bribing a Customs official.”²⁰⁴

The Burmel Publishing company began to experience police problems in 1958, from local New York authorities, the FBI, and the Postal Inspection Service. Burtman reported to Institute for Sex Research fieldworkers in 1958 that Burmel employees were being tailed by the police and that the FBI had, without a search warrant, stopped and searched vehicles carrying *Exotique* magazine. Shortly after this Burtman and Himmel’s offices and warehouse, and Burtman’s home, were subjected to police searches.²⁰⁵ Police reportedly “ransacked” Burtman’s apartment while he was on vacation in Florida in 1959.²⁰⁶

These first cases came to trial in 1959. In *New York v. Benedict Himmel and Leonard Burtman* (tried in April, 1959), New York officials prosecuted

²⁰³ The partners were involved in additional, comparatively minor cases during this period. The cases presented here are the major cases involving Burtman and associates between 1958 and 1970.

²⁰⁴ *Leonard Burtman and Benedict Himmel v. United States of America*, U.S. Supreme Court, October Term, 1970, *Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit*, p. 4 (RB—HML).

²⁰⁵ “*Exotique Magazine*,” fieldnote (c. 1958), KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

²⁰⁶ “Burmel Publishing Company, Data 2/59” fieldnote, KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*

Burtman and Himmel for twelve novelette publications, of which three were found obscene. Interestingly, the texts were verbatim plagiarisms of unexceptional pulp magazine fiction articles originally published in the mid-1930's (see footnote 181, p. 177 above). These were merely repackaged by Burtman and supplemented with fetishistic illustrations and photographs of scantily clad (but not nude) women in mild fetishistic costume. This evidently pushed the publications over the threshold of obscenity. The court was unmoved by arguments that Burtman and Himmel were guilty of, if anything, only plagiarism of previously published material whose copyright had expired.²⁰⁷ Their initial conviction in this case, which had a suspended sentence, contributed to the demise of the Burmel Publishing Company. An Institute for Sex Research fieldnote stated:²⁰⁸

Burtman and his partner were forced, under the suspended sentence, to sell the Burmel Co. They sold to Mr. Grasberg of the Kaysey Sales Co. (cf. corresp.), who will evidently continue publishing *Exotique*.

(A more direct factor was a seizure of Burmel assets, discussed below.) The conviction was reversed on appeal and a new trial ordered. Due to a combination of mistakes made by state and judicial officials, and skillful legal work by Herbert Monte-Levy, the charges in this case were dropped on agreement with the District Attorney's office in November 1961.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ See *Court of Special Sessions of the City of New York - Part III: New York County, The People of the State of New York v. Benedict Himmel, Leonard Burtman. Information Nos. 879 and 880/58*, reporter's minutes for trial, April 6, 1959, and sentencing, June 4, 1959 (RB—HML).

²⁰⁸ "Censorship. Burmel Publishing Co." fieldnote (by Paul Gebhard), KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th c.)—BURMEL*.

²⁰⁹ Monte-Levy letter to Gebhard, December 6, 1961 (PHGA).

This case was immediately followed by three overlapping police actions: a second New York state prosecution, this directed against Seymour Grasberg, and two federal investigations initiated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

On Monday, April 6, 1959, the same day that Burtman and Himmel were tried in New York v. Benedict Himmel and Leonard Burtman, an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service was pushed to the prosecution stage. This investigation had commenced in the fall of 1958, and gathered evidence that Pigalle Imports, a Burtman-Himmel corporation that handled distribution for Burmel Publishing, Co., had transmitted via mail material that the Post Office alleged violated U.S.C. Title 18, Section 1461. Highlighted in court documents are two categories of material that inspired the investigation: (1) nude photographs, and (2) “a number of books, photographs, and drawings appearing to deal with a variety of obscene, sex deviationist practices.”²¹⁰ “Sex deviationist” was the codeword used for American Fetish material in this case.

Burtman and Himmel were president and secretary-treasurer of both Burmel and Pigalle Imports, respectively. Court documents indicate that Himmel was cited in this case because his name appeared on business documents obtained by the Post Office—it was Himmel who had obtained, using his name, a post office box for Pigalle Imports and filled out New York documents identifying himself as proprietor for Pigalle Imports. Based on an affidavit filed by the investigating Postal Inspector, on April 6, 1959, a grand jury delivered a thirty-nine count indictment against Ben Himmel and Pigalle Imports. A search warrant and warrant for Himmel’s arrest were issued the following day.

²¹⁰ See Otis Pratt Pearsall [Assistant U.S. Attorney], *Affidavit in opposition to motion by Burmel Publishing Company and Pigalle Imports, Inc. to suppress....* U.S. v. Ben Himmel and Pigalle Imports, C 158-259, page 2 (RB—HML). This document is hereafter referenced as “Pearsall Affidavit #1.”

On Tuesday, April 7, 1959, Burtman and Himmel, having the previous day been found guilty of publishing obscene literature in a New York state court, returned to work during a week that would prove to be an unprecedented disaster. At 9:30 A.M., Federal Marshals and Postal Inspectors descended on Burtman's offices, arrested Ben Himmel, and spent the entire day carting away virtually everything, including complete contents of desks and unopened boxes.²¹¹ In effect, the offices were stripped bare. The indiscriminate search and seizure lasted to shortly after 5:00 P.M. Despite this massive effort on the part of federal agents, after some initial legal skirmishing the case "languished"—there was no trial.²¹² However, most of this material was retained by federal authorities until September 1968, nine years after the initial seizure.²¹³

In addition to these criminal prosecutions, in June 1959 the Post Office initiated mail-block proceedings against Pigalle Imports. In a style similar to the Klaw proceeding quoted above (p. 155), the Post Office evaluated materials mailed by Pigalle Imports and found them to be obscene. More specifically, the materials included matter found "to appeal certainly to sex deviates." On June 29, 1959 the Post Office issued a mail-block against "Pigalle Imports, and its agents and representatives as such, at New York, New York." Mail directed to

²¹¹ A partial list of the "fruits" of this search are listed above, page 175. Highlighted in the court documents is a seized trunk, which contained, "one pair hip-length boots, many pairs of knee-length and half-knee length boots, a rubber lined restraining outfit similar to a straight jacket, four brassieres of theatrical type, one of which was rubber, and one pair of black bloomers" (Pearsall Affidavit #1, p. 7; RB—HML).

²¹² Herbert Monte-Levy Affidavit, 64 Cr. 108, United States v. Burtman et al. (1964), p. 5 (RB—HML).

²¹³ On September 20, 1968, Monte-Levy received a letter from U.S. Attorney Jack Kaplan officially notifying him that the materials seized in 1959 were available to be picked up (RB—HML). Attached was an inventory of 279 cartons of material still held at that time.

these addresses was returned to senders marked “unlawful.”²¹⁴ At this point, both Burmel Publishing Company and Pigalle Imports were out of business. Next on the police hit list was their successor company, Kaysey Sales.

In the aftermath of these attacks, Burtman employee Seymour Grasberg was designated the president of a new company, Kaysey Sales, which succeeded Burmel. Kaysey Sales was in operation by September 1959, when it issued a letterhead notice to Burmel customers that stated: “The old Burmel Publishing Company has ceased to exist and we are the successors.”²¹⁵ Although Burtman insisted that he had no relationship with the new Kaysey company—clearly in an effort to shield himself and the new company from further prosecution—there was in fact no change in the (Burtman produced) products of Kaysey when compared with Burmel.²¹⁶ Burtman remained at the helm.

Kaysey was the target of simultaneous investigations by New York state authorities and the Postal Inspection Service, which were hot on the trail of the new corporate entity. On Tuesday, November 24, 1959, New York City police arrested Grasberg and searched the offices of Kaysey Sales, removing three boxes of material. This search was conducted without a warrant, and was later held to be illegal. Concretely illustrating relationships that existed between law enforcement agencies, during the search the New York police phoned the local office of the Postal Inspection Service, and a Postal Inspector arrived on the

²¹⁴ Post Office Department, June 9, 1959, *Oral Initial Decision of Hearing Examiner in the Matter of the Complaint that PIGALLE IMPORTS, at New York, New York, is engaged in conducting a scheme in violation of 39 U.S. Code, Section 259a*. P.O.D. Docket No. 1/138. (Administrative orders are attached.) USPO Library, obscenity rulings binder.

²¹⁵ Seymour Grasberg letter to Bellaire Novelty, September 14, 1959 (RB—HML). This letter was presented as evidence in *U.S. v. A Loft on the Third Floor...* (1959).

²¹⁶ See Gebhard letter to Burtman, April 19, 1961 (PHGA). Here Gebhard—responding to the exigencies of this particular situation—plays along with the ruse.

scene while the New York police search was still underway.²¹⁷ The Postal Inspector, concerned that evidence important to their case might disappear, immediately initiated a search warrant. The following day, the offices of Kaysey sales were raided again, this time by federal officers and on a much larger scale. Nearly five tons of material was removed during a search conducted by Federal Marshals and Postal Inspectors on Wednesday, November 25, 1959.²¹⁸

The New York state case that emerged from these linked investigations was *People of the State of New York v. Seymour Grasberg*. Grasberg was convicted of four counts: one of “possession with intent to sell, give away, distribute and show, of ‘a certain obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent, masochistic, sadistic and disgusting set of pictures.” The second and third counts employed the same language to describe three issues of *Exotique* magazine.²¹⁹ The conviction was appealed, but the charges were eventually dropped by the District Attorney in light of a federal court ruling which addressed the admissibility of evidence gathered by federal officers on November 25, 1959. The ruling held illegal the New York search and seizure conducted on November 24th as well as, on technical grounds, the Federal search and seizure conducted on November 25th.²²⁰ (The two were addressed together because of their implicit linkage.) All material seized was ordered returned.

²¹⁷ Otis Pratt Pearsall, *Affidavit in opposition to motions of Kaysey Sales Company, Inc. to quash a grand jury subpoena duces tecum, and to suppress and return evidence*. U.S. v. A Loft on the 6th Floor..., December 28, 1959.

²¹⁸ This was a smaller haul than in the April seizure by federal agents described above, which was reported to be eleven tons in weight. See *People of the State of New York v. Seymour Grasberg*, New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division—First Department, Record on Appeal (1960), p. 50-51.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²²⁰ See Monte Levy letter to Gebhard, July 21, 1961 (PHGA). U.S. v. A Loft on the Sixth Floor..., Opinion, 182 F. Supp. 322, March 30, 1960.

The federal case, *U.S. v. A loft on the 6th Floor of the Building at 40 E. 12th Street, New York, NY*, obviously could not withstand suppression of all evidence gathered on November 25th. That case ended with the ruling that the material was illegally gathered.

The final case to be highlighted here developed in 1964, in the context of a coordinated anti-smut campaign waged in New York City. Burtman, Himmel, and Grasberg emerged as prime targets in this campaign, which was spearheaded by Operation Yorkville, a multi-denomination anti-obscenity organization founded in 1962 and led by Catholic priest Father Morton A. Hill. This campaign had a direct impact not only on Burtman and Himmel, but the entire spectrum of erotica producers and sexual minorities in the New York City area.

The general context, and surely a motivation for the 1963-64 New York anti-smut campaign, was a clear shift in power away from proponents of chaste morality. Groups advocating such views had overwhelmingly dominated public discourse and the legal environment throughout the 1950's. As one indication of the changing times, 1962 was the year of the *Manual v. Day* Supreme Court decision, which overturned a Post Office nonmailability ruling directed against a major publisher of homoerotic magazines. As a result of this and numerous other developments, by 1963 it was clear enough to anti-obscenity advocates that unfavorable changes were underway on a broad scale. Intense anti-obscenity activities in 1963-64, which occurred nationwide,²²¹ were a response to these changes. More specifically, in reference to producers in the American

²²¹ Paul Gebhard wrote to Monte-Levy on May 29, 1964 (PHGA), in response to a letter in which Monte-Levy reviewed recent obscenity convictions in the New York area. Gebhard wrote, "Your letter of May 18 parallels letters we have received from all over the country--convictions everywhere. The pendulum is in full counterswing. We particularly appreciate your keeping us posted during these rather crucial times."

Fetish style, anti-smut campaigns conducted in 1963-64 were the last significant burst of activity, or a final gasp, of morality groups whose public power was irrevocably on the wane. Following this crackdown, a far more permissive environment emerged.

Throughout 1963, Father Hill engaged in a campaign to mobilize public opposition to local retailers and producers of “smut.” Armed with a graphic Citizens for Decent Literature film, “Perversion for Profit,” and a variety of other teaching aids, Father Hill made rounds among local civic organizations and city officials (cf. Kempton 1963). Unhappy with the results, in October 1963 Father Hill intensified his efforts. At the end of October 1963, Father Hill went on a widely publicized hunger strike to protest obscene literature.²²² This evoked the attention and support of New York Mayor Wagner. Father Hill also asked a sympathetic local newspaper columnist, Jimmy Breslin, to contact and interview two particularly egregious local producers of smut: Leonard Burtman and Ben Himmel.²²³

The product of this interview was a scathing attack on the two men, published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on October 30, 1963. Breslin wrote:

UNABASHED SMUT

Leonard Burtman, the president of Selbee Publications, Room 405, 1733 Broadway, is a chipmunkish-looking man with gray hair and brown-rimmed glasses and yesterday he said he was going to stand behind his company's products, a couple of despicable magazines which can be found well displayed in smut stores on 42d St.

“As far as I'm concerned, there is nothing wrong with these books,” Burtman was saying.

²²² See “City opens drive on Pornography — Priest's Fast Prompts Move by Wagner to Halt Sale of Smut to Children,” by McCandlish Phillips, *New York Times*, October 29, 1963, p. 1.

²²³ Father Hills' initiation of the Breslin interview is noted in ISR fieldnote, “Censorship NYC, 3/64 trip notes,” KIRSGR vertical file.

The treasurer of Selbee Publications, Ben Himmel, a big man who was smoking a cigar, thumbed through a bound file of one of their magazines and he said he couldn't see what all the trouble was about.

"What's the matter, you don't look at pretty girls?"

Himmel was even harder to take than Burtman, who admitted that he would not read his own magazines.

For a number of years, these two men have been engaged in the business of turning out the type of magazine which is in the news today through the protest of the Rev. Morton Hill, of St. Ignatius Church on Park Ave. Father Hill wants the city to do something about these magazines. He had created the beginning of some sort of public anger. But yesterday, instead of running, the officers of Selbee Publications looked right at you and said they had every right to put out their magazines and they were not about to stop.

The article continued along these lines. At Burtman's suggestion, Breslin also contacted Herbert Monte-Levy.²²⁴ Monte-Levy spoke with Breslin on the telephone, and dictated the following notes following their conversation:²²⁵

Breslin called me late yesterday on the telephone. This was the conversation:

I said, I knew you'd be calling me. Mr. Burtman told me you would be wanting to pluck my legal brains.

Breslin said, that's right, I can use all the help I can get in writing up an editorial. I said, what can I do for you.

He said, Well, you know all the stuff that's going on in the city now, with a hue and a cry about pornographic magazines. I went over to see your clients, Burtman and Himmel, and, Jesus, what a bunch of mother fuckers those fucks are. I don't know how they get away with it.

I said, get away with what? Everything they put out is perfectly legal.

Breslin said, if it is, it shouldn't be. You know the kind of stuff they put out? It's what we in the trade call one-handed stuff.

One handed stuff, I asked. I suspect I know what you mean, but enlighten me.

Well, he said, you know, where you read with the one hand holding the book and with the other hand you jerk off.

I said to him, is this your objection to the magazines? That they might lead to masturbation?

Yeah, sure, that's what I object to. This appeals to sick people, and gets them to jerk off.

²²⁴ Monte-Levy, who had represented the partners since 1959, was well qualified to speak about the content of Burtman's publications. Throughout the years that he represented Burtman and associates, Monte-Levy evaluated each publication individually for compliance with current obscenity standards.

²²⁵ Monte-Levy memorandum dictated October 30, 1963, re: Jimmy Breslin (RB—HML).

Beyond a specific attack on materials published by Burtman et al. (and a representative chaste worldview), the Breslin article was a part of the general intensification of efforts directed against “smut,” as well as other activities such as gay bars in the city.²²⁶ On Friday, January 24, 1964, *Life* magazine—which was then preparing an article on censorship and obscenity—interviewed Burtman and Monte-Levy in Monte-Levy’s New York office.²²⁷ Burtman highlighted Operation Yorkville and the upcoming World’s Fair as two causes of the on-going crackdown. Burtman noted:

Looking at the local picture, the situation in New York City now has never been as bad in this city, ever. And I think that this is caused partly by Operation Yorkville, partly by the fact that the administration wants to clean up the Times Square for the Worlds Fair visitors. This is undoubtedly the reason why they’re running around New York beat. The cases that have come up in the last two or three months that are in New York courts, it’s shocking.

The “shocking” cases included extensive arrests of clerks in Time Square area bookstores (Burtman argued that the clerks could hardly be held responsible for the inventory of the stores in which they worked), which were resulting in convictions.²²⁸ Burtman and associates were themselves soon a direct police target. The following Tuesday, January 28, 1964, a 66 count indictment was filed against Burtman, Himmel, Grasberg, and various corporate titles used by them.²²⁹ Monte-Levy was soon very busy, and wrote to Paul Gebhard on March 2, 1964 (PHGA):

²²⁶ The latter directly affected the development of the Gay Leather style in New York, as I discuss below.

²²⁷ This interview was recorded at the time on an Edison dictaphone disk. Mr. Levy gave me the original disk during our January 1997 interview. The transcribed interview and recording (on CD) will be deposited at KIRSGR.

²²⁸ On the 1963-64 New York City anti-smut campaign, see also Kuh 1967, p. 98.

²²⁹ The full citation is *United States of America v. Leonard Burtman, a/k/a/ Leonard Burton, Benedict Himmel, a/k/a/ Ben Himmel, Seymour Grasberg, Pigalle Imports, Inc., Burmel Publishing Company, Inc., Ben-Lee*

All hell has broken loose particularly on Burtman and Himmel. A couple of months ago, a columnist for the New York Herald-Tribune, Jimmy Breslin, wrote a particularly nasty attack about them and their current corporation, Selbee Associates, Inc. I do not know whether that is responsible for what has happened since, but consider:

The old indictment against Ben Himmel and Pigalle²³⁰, almost five years old, has in a sense been dredged up again. What I mean is that there is a new indictment now, the Federal Court, naming not only Himmel, but Burtman and Seymour Grasberg as well, with 66 counts including a conspiracy count, naming various other corporations with which one or more of them had been associated.

Monte Levy continued with a description of a seemingly systematic attack on dealers in Selbee publications. He noted, “Meanwhile, I know of no other criminal cases going on involving magazines, or which have gone on for the past couple of years...” The 1964 indictment was obviously derived from the 1959 indictment—many of the specific counts were the same as in the earlier U.S. v. Himmel and Pigalle Imports case. The alleged violations were of U.S. Title 18, section 1461 and 1462.

This case was eventually dropped on February 26, 1968.²³¹ By this time, in the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Fanny Hill decision, legal prohibitions on fetishistic material such as that published by Burtman in the 1950’s and early 1960’s were virtually eliminated. A variety of far more explicit materials were emerging at that time, such as that published in Burtman’s *Bizarre Life* magazine.

To summarize, in each case cited above the fetishistic content of “sexual deviationist” material published by Burtman and associates was a key category addressed in police actions. Such material was targeted by law enforcement agencies at the local and federal level, as well as morality organizations such as

Enterprises, Inc., Kaysey Sales Company, Inc., and Selbee Associates, Inc., United States District Court, Southern District of New York. 64 Cr. 108.

²³⁰ The 1959 case of U.S. v. Ben Himmel and Pigalle Imports which, as discussed above, had “languished.”

Operation Yorkville. Through 1964, such materials were subjected to periodic police attacks. These attacks ended after a final flurry of activity in 1963-64, which encompassed both Klaw and Burtman. A few years later far more graphic material, such as Burtman's *Bizarre Life*, was unmolested by police.

To close the saga of Burtman and associates through 1971, following the 1969-70 "smuggling" case, which resulted in prison sentences for Burtman and Himmel, the partnership broke up. Burtman and Himmel both permanently moved from the New York City area during the 1970's.

²³¹ Monte-Levy mentions a Nolle Prosequi filing in a July 25, 1968 letter to U.S. Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, Jr. (RB—HML).

THE HOUSE OF MILAN			
162 NORTH STATE			
SUITE 901			
CHICAGO, 60601			
Phone: 236-2105			
Item	Name	Material	Price
1010	SATANA	LEATHER	\$149.50
1020	EXOTICA	Vinyl Patent	99.50
		LEATHER	124.50
1030	VIXON	Vinyl Patent	110.00
		LEATHER	129.00
1040	HOUR-GLASS	Vinyl Patent	69.00
		LEATHER	74.50
1070	FEMINA SET	LEATHER	67.00
1080	CINCHER	Vinyl Patent	32.50
		LEATHER	38.50
1090	HIP-HUGGER	LEATHER	22.50
1120	MASK	Vinyl Patent	5.00
		LEATHER	7.50
1140	RAVEN	LEATHER	124.50
1170	VENUS	LEATHER	69.00
1200	CONTESSA	LEATHER	29.00
1210	SULTRY	LEATHER	19.00
1212	FANTASY	LEATHER	48.00
2039	MID-NIGHT	Vinyl Patent	109.50
		LEATHER	124.50
2060	EBONY	LEATHER	62.50
6080	BIZARRE	LEATHER	80.00 65.00
5011	DIANE	LEATHER	49.50 39.50
6090	EMPRESS	LEATHER	140.50 125.00
7000	FRANCOISE	LEATHER	95.00
7040	CHRISTINA	Rubber or Leather	57.00
7041	MARGARET	Rubber or Leather	58.00
7064	VERVE	LEATHER	45.00
8000	Thigh Length Boot 4" heel	LEATHER	149.50 125.00
ALSO AVAILABLE			
SINGLE GLOVE		LEATHER	32.50
BELTS-RESTRAINING		LEATHER	29.50 up
COLLAR		LEATHER	9.50
WHIPS		LEATHER	
A. RIDING CROP		LEATHER	2.00 5.50
B. SPECIALS		LEATHER	8.00 up
NOTE: WE MAKE ANYTHING & EVERYTHING YOU DESIRE, WRITE OR PHONE - DROP IN !! MONDAY THRU FRIDAY, NOON TILL 7:30. (SATURDAY 11:30- 2:30 BY APPOINTMENT ONLY).			

Figure 129: House of Milan price list, attached to the Tana and Mara Costume's *Bizarre Costume Catalog* (1960), c. 1964. (GK)

4.34 House of Milan

House of Milan, initially and briefly called Futura Fashions, was formed as a fetish clothing company in Chicago in the fall of 1964. House of Milan evolved into a company that today is called HOM. In the 1970's, HOM became one of the largest producers and distributors of SM and fetishistic erotica in the United States, with an inventory including magazines, videos, and sex toys. I briefly highlight this company because the social

and business relationships underlying House of Milan and its successors provide a concrete linkage between the first and second generation of producers in the American Fetish style—including Guyette, Coutts, Klaw, and Burtman—and producers that exist today. There are direct continuities in such relationships that extend from Charles Guyette in 1934 to producers in 1997.

Yogi Klein, who had for years been visiting his cousin Lennie Burtman and “hanging out” at Burmel and its successors in New York, was the principal co-founder of House of Milan. Klein’s partner was Ms. B., who would later take over the business. Klein modeled some products offered by the new business on Burtman’s operation—for example, House of Milan published a contact-correspondence magazine called *Latent Image* that was explicitly modeled on Burtman’s contact publications. However, Klein, who has maintained a lifelong interest in fetish clothing, took the company in a different direction from Burtman’s publishing enterprises. Klein and Ms. B.’s new business in Chicago became the first public retail outlet for explicitly fetishistic clothing in the United States. (The closest historical precedent is Yva Richard or Diana Slip.)

In its formation, House of Milan was explicitly linked with Burtman in New York. The *Bizarre Costume Catalog*, House of Milan’s first fetish clothing catalog, was purchased from Burtman in 1964. This catalog was originally published c. 1960 by Burtman, using the corporate title Tana & Mara Costumes. (Tana at that time was Burtman’s wife, and Mara was a friend.

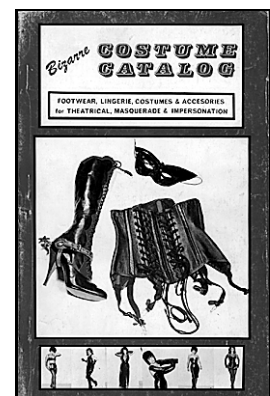


Figure 130: The *Bizarre Costume Catalog*, published by Burtman c. 1960. Unsold copies were obtained by Yogi Klein, who used this as the first catalog for House of Milan in 1964. (GK)

Neither was a publisher.) The Bizarre Costume Catalog was a thick, digest-sized publication filled with various fetish clothing items. These were extravagantly priced in order to discourage sales. As Yogi Klein explained, publisher Burtman's goal with the catalog was not to sell fetish clothing, which he did not have, but to sell catalogs. A few hundred unsold copies of this catalog existed in 1964 when House of Milan was founded, and Klein talked his cousin Lennie into letting him purchase the remaining copies.

The back cover of the catalog had an unused white space at the bottom of the page, on which Klein had printed a House of Milan logo and address. This was done in Chicago. The catalog was initially distributed through adult bookstores in Chicago, and the company set up a retail storefront on North State Street in Chicago. Although Klein (obviously) did not have in his inventory the items listed in the Bizarre Costume Catalog, House of Milan did obtain custom fetish goods, sometime quite creatively. An example is "Oscar"—as Klein recalled (Bienvenu 1997):

Our first producer was a guy named Oscar. Now who was Oscar? I'm glad you asked that question.²³² Let me tell you about Oscar. Oscar actually worked for very wealthy people and he made two products. One was he made custom vests for dogs. In those days [...] you had a little dog, you'd bring it in, and Oscar would make, out of maybe wool, he'd make a little vest and it fastened underneath, and when you walked your dog the dog was warm because he had this little vest. But he also made, I swear, he made dog booties, little—and he made them out of leather. So that when your little poodle or whatever it was walked out he didn't walk on the snow. So he would make little booties out of leather. So we found this



Figure 131: House of Milan logo printed on the back of Burtman's Bizarre Costume Catalog (GK)

²³² After several formal interviews with me, Yogi had reached a point where he anticipated my follow-on questions.

Oscar, who was starving because people didn't want to pay that much for little booties for their dog. We finally convinced him to make certain types of little bondage mittens because they were close to dog booties. That was Oscar.

Klein's business partner Ms. B. gradually assumed the role of principal in the business, and in the early 1970's found outside investors for the company. With new financial backing, Ms. B. and House of Milan moved to California and became a new company, named "HOM" in order to maintain continuity with the antecedent House of Milan. Yogi Klein remained in Chicago. When the company moved to California its product line shifted to publishing and became much larger in scope and more sophisticated. From "amateur" black and white printed publications in Chicago, HOM in California expanded into a major publisher of glossy, color SM and fetish magazines. These emphasized female domination and bondage.

Ms. B. eventually sold her interest in HOM, and today is the president of an upscale fetish clothing company.²³³



Figure 132: *Bitch*, a “bizarre female domination publication,” published by HOM in California (c. 1972). Three generations removed from Charles Guyette (GK)

²³³ On points made in the discussion above, see Bienvenu 1997 and Bienvenu interviews with Yogi Klein, January 27, 1996; May 8, 1996; May 26, 1997. The latter three interviews will eventually be deposited at the Kinsey Institute.

4.35 Additional producers in the early American Fetish style

In this section I identify several additional producers in the American Fetish style during the period of this dissertation. Evaluated in terms of stylistic innovation, these producers tended to be “imitators” and pornographers (as defined above, p. 116), in some cases basing much of their inventory on plagiarized work of Coutts, Klaw, and Burtman. Researchers will find occasional references to these producers in documents and oral histories addressing mid-century producers in the American Fetish style. I include this summary section to balance my profile of American Fetish producers, and as an aid to future scholars.

4.351 New York City and East Coast Producers

As previously noted, New York City was the center of innovation in the American Fetish style through the mid-1960's. Key innovators in the style are discussed above. A number of other producers contributed to the development of the American Fetish style in comparatively minor ways. They include individual producers Aaron “Moe” Shapiro and Edward “Eddie” Mishkin, both of whom were sufficiently established as pornographers to be subpoenaed to appear before the Kefauver inquiry in 1955. Noteworthy corporate producers/resellers include Satellite Publications and Gordons, a firm based in Toronto.

Moe Shapiro. As mentioned above, Shapiro was the publisher of *La Plume*, the first American Fetish contact magazine.²³⁴ *La Plume* served as a model for Burtman's contact publications and later publications by House of Milan and others. Like most advertisements in this genre, it is virtually certain that the majority of personal ads in *La Plume* were fake "house ads." Despite this, *La Plume* did facilitate meetings between practitioners, and thus played a small direct role in the development of subcultural networks. Shapiro was also the proprietor of Gargoyle Sales and later Waron Books of Brooklyn, New York. During the 1960's Waron Books issued American Fetish derived material such as "Dollie's Dilemma," a crude publication drawing from antecedents such as Carlo and Coutts. In his Gargoyle Sales and later Waron Books publications, Shapiro used the pseudonym "Sadie Mazo."²³⁵

Shapiro has been described as a businessman-pornographer who was a "predatory" publisher. For example, according to J.B. Rund, a practice used by Shapiro was to segment publications into parts that would be sold through pornography outlets at outrageous prices. Shapiro's goal was to entice customers, disdainfully described as "suckers," to keep coming back for more.²³⁶ While the practice of maximizing profit through segmented products was not unusual among American Fetish producers, Shapiro's approach reflected a different orientation toward his products and customers than that of a producer-practitioner such as Coutts. As with other pornographers, aesthetic concerns were virtually nil.

Providing an interesting illustration of connections among producers, Shapiro and Burtman were business partners in one of Shapiro's mid-1950's

²³⁴ See Figure 122, p. 183 above. Issues of *La Plume* are found in the KIRSGR vertical file folder: *Correspondence Clubs — La Plume*.

²³⁵ See Klaw letters to Gebhard, July 21, 1959 and July 28, 1960 (PHGA).

enterprises, Gargoyle Sales, and were possibly relatives at one point.²³⁷ According to Yogi Klein, one of Burtman's six wives was a relative of Shapiro.²³⁸

Shapiro was issued a subpoena to appear before the Kefauver Committee inquiry on the same day as Irving Klaw, May 24, 1955, but failed to appear (U.S. Congress. Senate. 1955a, p. 267). He was listed as a major pornographer by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service as late as the late-1960's.²³⁹

Edward "Eddie" Mishkin. Eddie Mishkin was a professional pornographer who, because of sustained adverse publicity—including a subpoenaed appearance before the Kefauver Committee in 1955 and a 1966 U.S. Supreme Court case²⁴⁰—became the most infamous of all producers discussed in this dissertation. Mishkin was a publisher and distributor who also operated retail outlets in the Times Square area in New York City. He was at one time a business partner with Moe Shapiro, and according to J.B. Rund was tightly connected with the Mafia. From the early 1950's through the 1960's, Mishkin published a variety of materials ranging from "borderline" materials to "hard core" pornography. Included in this portfolio were a number of cheaply produced sadomasochistic texts. The most infamous was a series entitled "Nights of Horror," which depicted grotesque tortures and were linked in the

²³⁶ This information is based on conversations between Rund and Shapiro; Bienvenu interview with Vasta-Rund, January 16, 1997.

²³⁷ A letter from Burtman to Shapiro is among the itemized "fruits" seized by federal authorities in their April 7, 1959 raid on Pigalle Imports-Burmel. The letter was found in Burtman's desk.

²³⁸ This marriage would have been during the 1950's—possibly to Shapiro's daughter (Bienvenu interview with Klein, May 26, 1997).

²³⁹ U.S. Post Office Corporate Information Service (L'Enfant Plaza, Washington, D.C.), "Obscenity File."

²⁴⁰ The case was *Edward Mishkin v. State of New York* (383 U.S. 502), decided on March 21, 1966, the same day as the *Fanny Hill* decision. Like Klaw, whom he directly followed in the order of testimony, Mishkin asserted his right to silence under the fifth amendment and refused to testify during the Kefauver inquest (see U.S. Congress. Senate. 1955a, p. 239-243).

press to a juvenile murder in 1954 (cf. Kuh 1967, p. 43-46). In general, such works were outside of the American Fetish tradition of bizarre, in that they emphasized various forms of non-consensual torture. However, these works drew from imagery and conventions found within the American Fetish genre—for example, in the linkage of fetishism and sadomasochism.²⁴¹

Illustrating Mishkin's *modus operandi*, one writer who worked for Mishkin described his tasking for a new work (Kuh 1967, p. 101):

Well, he wanted a book in which there were lesbian scenes, the sex had to be very strong, it had to be rough, it had to be clearly spelled out. In other words, I couldn't be subtle about it; I had to write sex very bluntly, make the scenes very strong [...] In this book he wanted an emphasis on beatings and fetishism and clothing—irregular clothing.

This description of the desired product in terms of blunt depiction of sexual activities, "rough" sex and "irregular" clothing, exemplifies the approach of the pornographer. According to J.B. Rund, Mishkin's ignorance of aesthetic issues associated with the materials he published was profound. Rund noted:²⁴²

Mishkin is not a person who had created input into it. He's didn't know, he's a guy who knows nothing about [erotica]. He's a businessman.

Roughly analogous to producers of "tourist art" as framed in Crane's analysis, Mishkin appropriated existing American Fetish conventions, as he understood them, and with a noteworthy lack of concern about issues of aesthetics published derivative, commodified materials. From a practitioner-producer perspective, the quality of most of these products was extremely low. To a lesser degree, a similar orientation is found in the case of Irving Klaw.

²⁴¹ Mishkin's appropriations from the American Fetish genre were more than thematic. The transcript from Mishkin's Kefauver Committee appearance indicates that he directly plagiarized material from Klaw, and as a result had an extremely tense relationship with Klaw (see U.S. Congress. Senate. 1955a, p. 241).



Figure 133: Eddie Mishkin, testifying (PC)

Satellite Publishing Company. Located one half block from Irving Klaw's New Jersey NUTRIX location was a separate company, Satellite Publishing. Satellite operated during the early and mid-1960's and is occasionally referenced in contemporary documents and oral histories. Satellite published works very similar to Klaw's—sufficiently similar, in fact, that the Postal Inspection Service assumed in 1964 that there was likely a business connection between Satellite and Klaw.²⁴³ In addition to photographs, Satellite reportedly produced a magazine entitled "Bound."

Gordon's. Gordon's, "specializing in the unusual," was a Canadian publisher and distributor that resold merchandise originally produced by Leonard Burtman and others.²⁴⁴ Gordon's also used the corporate titles: Phantasy Fotos Enterprise, Joan and Judy, Domestic Services, G.M.

²⁴² Bienvenu interview with Vasta-Rund, January 16, 1997.

²⁴³ FBI, Newark, NJ office, February 4, 1964 letter re "Background information concerning Satellite Publishing Company" (Klaw FBI file; RB).

Enterprises, and Mme. Eva. The company operated circa 1960-1966, and sold a variety of products including pseudo-academic books, novelettes, and photosets addressing bondage, female domination, spanking, and bizarre costumes. It was perhaps the major Canadian distributor of American Fetish material during the 1960's.

Sam Menning, a producer of fetishistic lingerie and a photographer who worked for Robert Harrison, Irving Klaw, and Leonard Burtman, also merits mention here. During the late 1950's and early 1960's, Menning issued an independent catalog called "Sam Menning's Cover Girl Originals" that advertised his custom designed exotic lingerie. He also offered access to photo sessions to "photographers" and "hobbyists," presumably for a fee.

4.352 Los Angeles and West Coast Producers

In the case of the American Fetish style, early West Coast producers were largely imitators, if not outright plagiarizers, of material created in New York or associated with practitioner networks grounded in the New York City area. This situation existed through the late 1960's, when California emerged as the key site of pornography production in the United States—including American Fetish material.²⁴⁵ Known, major West Coast publishers of American Fetish material through the late 1960's include Continental Publications, Lucian Press, and Flag Publications. Little is known about these producers.

²⁴⁴ See KIRSGR vertical file folder: *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (Canada) (20th cent. 1960-) Gordons*.

²⁴⁵ During the mid-1980's, California, and more specifically the Los Angeles area, was cited as the point of origin of over eighty percent of pornography produced in the United States (United States 1986, p. 26).

Continental Publications, which also used the corporate titles Bizarre Books, Pagan Books, and Hamilton Publications, had a mailing address in Hollywood, California. Circa 1960 the firm published a magazine, *Dominate*, and issued ephemera that advertised Klaw NUTRIX booklets. These were re-printed, pirated versions. In 1960 Irving Klaw expended “considerable effort” in tracking down Continental Publications as the source of pirated versions of his work, and intended to file a lawsuit against the firm to halt this activity. However, he decided that such a legal action would be ill advised given the current political environment. Continental Publications was itself raided by Los Angeles police in June of 1960.²⁴⁶

The *Lucian Press* in Los Angeles resold materials published by Burtman, and published a magazine, *Fantasia*, that was very similar in style and format to *Exotique*. *Fantasia* was first published in 1957, and was preceded by three issues of a publication entitled *Domestic Discipline Bulletin*.²⁴⁷

Flag Publications, which used addresses in both San Diego and Los Angeles, was active from the late 1950’s through the 1960’s. The firm produced and sold a variety of products, including photo sets, novelettes, magazines, and a correspondence club digest. One unusual product issued by Flag was a phonograph album entitled “Tortura: The Sounds of Pain and Pleasure,” a 12 inch LP, subtitled “A factual living record of discipline and

²⁴⁶ See Klaw letter to Gebhard, December 13, 1960 (PHGA). For representative Hamilton ephemera, see KIRSGR vertical file *Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th c. 1960-1970)*. Interestingly, the 1960 Hamilton logo, an “H” centered in a oval shaped design, is identical to Burtman’s Selbee logo (c. 1964), with the difference that for Burtman the “H” is an “S.” This similarity is unexplained.

²⁴⁷ A bound set of issues 1-10 of *Fantasia* (c. 1957-58) is held at the Kinsey library.

punishment.”²⁴⁸ With the exception of the Tortura LP, Flag’s product line was very similar to Burtman’s, and in fact the firm resold Exotique and Selbee material published by Burtman. It is not known if these were resold originals or pirated copies. In any event, in terms of content and style of publication in the American Fetish genre, Flag followed the lead of publishers and stylistic innovators based in New York City.²⁴⁹

Circa 1964-65, Flag began publication of a magazine entitled *The Spankers Monthly*. With an obvious intent to not miss any niche in the market, in Flag ephemera *The Spankers Monthly* was credited with a purview that covered the spectrum of bizarre topics, including, “adult and juvenile discipline, transvestism, home movie and Polaroid hobbyists, exotica, sunbathing groups, male models, leather and rubber apparel, restraint, male and female domination and bondage.”²⁵⁰

Finally, the National Book Market Company, abbreviated NABOMA, was an antiquarian bookseller in Los Angeles that published and resold fetishistic books, drawings, and photo sets. NABOMA was established in 1935 and had specialized in imports of German-language books until World War II, when such imports became impossible. Thereafter, the firm’s product line shifted to English-language books. At some point following this transition, a customer inquiry led to the acquisition of *The Corset and the Crinoline* by W.B. Lord, a book addressing fetishistic corsetry. Extra copies were obtained and

²⁴⁸ KIRSGR holds a copy of the ‘Tortura’ LP. In 1997, it was located in the library audio-visual berger (as of 12/97, the KIRSGR on-line catalog did not list location information for this item).

²⁴⁹ In addition to Burtman’s products, Flag was linked to New York producers through at least one writer. A. de Granamour was a writer who worked for Klaw in the late 1940’s. After he moved to California in 1957, Granamour was approached by Flag and produced material for the firm on commission (cf. Granamour 1976).

²⁵⁰ See KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century)* —Flag Publications.

advertised in NABOMA ephemera, which led to further expressions of interest in such materials by prospective customers. NABOMA thus became connected with practitioner networks, and subsequently fetishistic material became a centerpiece of the firm's product line. Noted for its inventory of tight-lacing materials, NABOMA also offered fetishistic drawings and photographs addressing topics such as high-heels. Through a license agreement, NABOMA resold works of Nicholas de Mandville, an artist who created distinctive corsetry illustrations.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ See KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century)* —*Naboma Co.*. See also May 26, 1967 letter from NABOMA to David Kunzle, KIRSGR archives, supplemental materials, Kunzle Box.



Figure 134: Classic black leather motorcycle jacket (PC)

Chapter Five: Development of the Gay Leather style

Gay *Leather* is a style that developed twenty years after the European and American Fetish styles, in very different subcultural contexts of production. As illustrated above, there are a number of social-organizational and aesthetic continuities between the European and American Fetish styles—which are fundamentally European in origin. In contrast, the Gay Leather style is an indigenous American phenomenon that developed in relative isolation from the social circles and organizations underlying the American Fetish style. In terms of underlying subcultural networks, there is virtually no overlap between the two. Not surprisingly, during the period addressed in this dissertation there are marked differences in the composition of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles.

The Gay Leather style developed from two key antecedent groups: (1) the post-World War II California biker subculture, and (2) the “butch” element

of gay subcultures in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago. The Gay Leather style first emerged in Los Angeles, and later in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. The style developed in each city in different ways, primarily due to differences in the social groups in which the style was located. On the West Coast, for example, a diverse leather-biker subculture was the organizational context in which “leather” emerged as a cultural style. In contrast, in New York and Chicago the California biker style was first appropriated by gay men in the more narrow organizational context of gay SM networks and bars. In each location a particular configuration of social-organizational and cultural influences is found. In this chapter I profile the early development of the Gay Leather style, focusing particular attention on supporting subcultural networks and regional variations.

The key period of organizational development of the Gay Leather style was between 1954 and 1958. During this period the first “dedicated” gay leather bars²⁵² and (in California only) gay motorcycle clubs formed. In order of priority, centers of the Gay Leather style through 1958 were Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago. San Francisco, although today more closely associated with the gay leather subculture, did not develop distinct leather organizations until the early 1960’s (Rubin 1994, p. 140).

My presentation in this chapter is organized around these four early centers of the Gay Leather style, each of which differs in the precise trajectory of its development. Each is addressed in separate sub-sections below: Los Angeles (§ 5.1); New York (§ 5.2); Chicago (§ 5.3), and San Francisco (§ 5.4).

²⁵² A “dedicated” leather bar is one that expressly serves a gay leather clientele. Rubin (1994) uses the term in this context. A dedicated leather bar is contrasted with a “mixed” bar, which is a gay bar that has both leather and non-leather patrons. In mixed bars, which preceded dedicated leather bars, small groups of SM and/or leather practitioners would congregate, often in particular areas of the bar.

5.1 Origins: Los Angeles and the development of the biker motif

A number of key organizational and cultural precedents that contributed to the emergence of the Gay Leather style developed in California, specifically in the Los Angeles area. In this section I focus on three distinct influences on the Gay Leather style that originated in this region: the motorcycle club (MC)²⁵³ and leather bars; early popular culture representations of the leather style; and early gay erotica.

The motorcycle club first developed as an organizational form in the Los Angeles area, and it is in this organizational context that the motorcycle motif and key elements of the “leatherman” aesthetic initially developed.²⁵⁴ Unfortunately, few historical data have been collected on the early Los Angeles leather subculture.²⁵⁵ The few available accounts of the early leather subculture in Los Angeles cite the late 1940’s as the period when butch gay men, *some* of whom were interested in sexual domination and submission, participated in motorcycle clubs with mixed heterosexual and gay membership (Baldwin 1993, p. 107-115; Bean 1994, p. 191-196; Magister 1991, p. 97; Rubin 1994). In an account in the secondary literature, Thom Magister, a motorcycle club participant in the early 1950’s, provides a glimpse of one of these early

²⁵³ “MC” is a ubiquitous acronym used throughout the leather community. A 1997 organizational index lists 111 gay MCs currently active in the United States (Jacques 1997).

²⁵⁴ According to Berendt (1987), the basic design of the modern motorcycle jacket was established by a leather craftsman named Ross Langlitz in 1947. Motorcycle jackets are distinct from other notable jacket styles of the period, such as the U.S. Army “A-2” flight jacket, which was brown rather than black (Berendt 1988). The early twentieth-century German military is cited in the popular literature as a group known for early use of the black leather jacket (Farren 1985).

²⁵⁵ I am aware of no systematic historical research on the early Los Angeles leather subculture, particularly the MC component of the gay leather world. I was unable to do fieldwork on the West Coast for this dissertation project and here must rely almost exclusively on published secondary sources.

organizations. Magister met a California biker group while hitchhiking from downtown LA to Hollywood during the early 1950's. He later wrote of his surprise when he realized that some of the tough guys he was hanging out with were gay, including his ex-Marine friend and future lover Charley (Magister 1991, p. 93):

At first all I knew about Charley was that he worked as a stuntman, rode a Harley, drank a lot of beer, and hung out at a biker bar with his war buddies and their partners. It was the kind of bar where the crowd was loud and the action was rowdy and rough. Fights were frequent but usually by night's end everyone had slapped ass, hugged, and made up.

[...] I had grown up in Greenwich Village and knew what homosexuals were. They were limp-wristed, lisping sissies and I knew a few. A lot of my father's business associates were gay, as were a number of my teachers. My parents were liberals and connected with the arts so our "crowd" was pretty mixed and mixed-up. But I had no interest in those men at all. And it never occurred to me that butch, otherwise straight looking guys were sucking cock and hauling ass. While I wasn't innocent, I was naive about that side of homosexuality.

More fundamentally than sexual orientation or interest in SM, men in these early groups shared a tough, masculine camaraderie that embraced rough play and a break from middle-class norms. The ambiance was unmistakably "butch."²⁵⁶

A "butch" aesthetic emphasizing overt masculinity is a key component of the early Gay Leather style, and is a cultural phenomenon that found a social-organizational home in motorcycle clubs and leather bars. This phenomenon is linked to the limited set of roles and stereotypes available to gay men during the 1950's. Many "butch" gay men who gravitated toward the early leather subculture did so, in part, because of a rejection of effeminate gay stereotypes such as the queen, fairy, or sissy. These were the predominant gay stereotypes of the time, often derisively referred to as "fluff" by leathermen (Rubin 1994, p. 32). In contrast, for many members of the nascent gay leather subculture, the

²⁵⁶ "Butch" gay men are those with conventionally masculine mannerisms and personal style.

preferred gay self-image stressed manliness and toughness—the antithesis of the effeminate and “faggoty” homosexual. Many butch gay men who may not have been interested in leather or SM *per se* were attracted to the masculine gay role found in the leather-motorcycle subculture, and tended to gravitate toward leather groups. In addition, many gay men interested in SM sex, as well as those with a predilection toward leather or uniform fetishism, found their way into the local leather subculture.²⁵⁷

Motorcycle clubs with mixed heterosexual and gay membership served as an organizational precedent for the mid-1950’s development of explicitly gay MC’s. These organizations provided a social home for “butch” gay men. In the California case, it was in MC organizations and in contemporary leather bars that the link between the motorcycle leather motif and masculine gay sexuality was fixed in the context of a distinctive *gay* subculture. The first gay MCs, both in Los Angeles, were the *Satyrs*, formed in November of 1954 (Rubin 1994, p. 128), followed by *Oedipus* MC in 1958 (DeBlase 1996, p. 11).

Dedicated leather bars catering to a gay clientele developed during the same period, and existed in Los Angeles from the mid-1950’s.²⁵⁸ Virtually nothing is known about these early bars, but their development is not surprising. Prior to the emergence of the leather scene, bars occupied a central location in the institutional structure of homosexual communities (cf. D’Emilio 1983, p. 32-33), and Rubin points out that leather bars were a natural extension of this system (Rubin 1994, p. 120). For early gay leathermen, the bar developed as an organizational setting that supported the expression of

²⁵⁷ I thank Dr. Anthony DeBlase, former publisher-editor of *Drummer* and *Dungeonmaster* magazines and prominent member of the leather community, for stressing points made in this paragraph in personal correspondence. See also Rubin (1994, p. 32-35) on the topic of masculinity in gay leather subcultures.

masculine homosexuality, in the context of a distinctive subculture marked by the biker leather “uniform.”

5.11 *The Wild One* and the popularization of the biker leather “uniform”

The first generation of the new gay leather subculture, today loosely referred to as the “Old Guard,” adopted the basic biker uniform of leather jackets, wide belts, boots, jeans, caps and gloves. These items of clothing were embellished by MC “colors”—insignia and personal decorations including various pins, patches, studs, and emblems. This occurred in California by 1954. By the late 1950’s, the leather biker uniform first adopted in California was the predominant stylistic marker of butch gay subcultures, including SM practitioners, in both New York and Chicago. These are rapid developments in widely dispersed regions, which leads naturally to the question of how this transmission occurred.

The process through which the early Gay Leather style was promulgated was indirect and mediated by popular culture. Although there were occasional contacts between early leather groups and individuals in different geographic regions, there is no evidence that the style was transmitted directly from California leather groups to gay groups in different regions.



Figure 135: 1950’s radical masculinity—Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* (1953) (PC)

²⁵⁸ Gayle Rubin, personal communication, 29 April 1997. See Rubin 1994, p. 158.

Rather, a key event in the popularization of the leather style appears to be a popular culture film released in 1954: *The Wild One*.

The Wild One, starring young Marlon Brando, drew its imagery from California motorcycle clubs and introduced MC style to a wide popular audience. Rubin notes about Marlon Brando's character "Johnny," the leader of an MC group clad in the (now) classic motorcycle jacket uniform (Rubin 1994, p. 29):

Johnny wore a Harley cap, a black leather biker jacket, a tight white T-shirt, a wide black belt, tight jeans, and engineer boots. His outfit is further accessorized with black leather gloves and aviator sunglasses. His appearance inspired many young men who adopted the same outfit. It quickly caught on as the "uniform" of the early gay male leather community. Soon men dressed like these gangs began to percolate through the gay bars of the period.

Underlying this claim about the significance of the film is a consistent pattern in oral histories addressing the mid-1950's. In these data one finds frequent reference to the film and the role that it played in helping to standardize conventions of the gay leather subculture (e.g., all black leather, rather than brown, motorcycle style jackets). Samuel Steward, for example, noted:²⁵⁹



Figure 136: "Johnny" in motorcycle leather—*The Wild One* (1953) (PC)

²⁵⁹ Quotation from Gregory Sprague interview with Samuel M. Steward, May 20, 1982 (LA&M). Other oral histories held at the Leather Archives that emphasize the impact of *The Wild One* include Jack Rinella's interviews with Frank Olson, July 27, 1994; and Chuck Renslow, June 14, 1994. See also Gayle Rubin's interview with Chuck Renslow (1991, p. 54; LA&M). Mr. Renslow repeated this point during my first formal interview with him, Renslow(a), January 25, 1996. Rubin makes the same point in regard to her oral histories: "Almost every man of a certain age I interviewed mentions this film and its impact, either upon their own fantasies or upon the nascent community itself" (Rubin 1994, p. 29).

SS: ...Then Marlon Brando's movie. I think that as much as anything else began to

GS: Which movie was that?

SS: The Wild Ones. began to coalesce the thing. Began to make it known to people who didn't know why they were harboring such emotions. Ah But all of a sudden after The Wild Ones, which I think was dated 1955, ah ... things began to draw together. And in New York ah a couple of bars began to appear and leather ... ah ... began to make its self shown.

As Rubin notes, “The Wild One (and other less memorable films of the genre) did not create the symbolics of leather. The film provided new spins and wider access to a symbolism that was already established” (Rubin 1994, p. 30).

As noted, this symbolism was appropriated quickly. It seems clear that motorcycle leather was a potent symbol that resonated strongly with butch gay men: the connotation was (and to some degree remains) masculine, radical, and sexual. During the mid-1950's motorcycle leather became the central symbolic marker of the new, butch gay subculture, and by 1957 leather bars filled with men dressed in the distinctive biker uniform worn by Johnny's gang in *The Wild One* appeared in New York and Chicago.

Once appropriated as a symbolic marker, motorcycle leather served to demarcate and sustain the boundaries of the subculture, as well as the conventions of the new style. For example, tacit norms developed that guided the composition and use of the leather uniform. These included conventions, reminiscent of rules for military dress, such as the following (Baldwin 1993, p. 111):

Always wear boots, butch ones and preferably black. Always wear a wide black leather belt—plain, not fancy. Never mix brown with black leather. Never mix chrome or silver trim with gold or brass trim. Long pants only, Levis or leather, and no shorts. Chaps indicate more commitment than levis, and leather pants more commitment than chaps, especially when worn consistently. Leather jackets must have epaulets (bike riders excepted). Head gear is reserved for Tops or experienced or heavy bottoms only.



Figure 137: Idealized “heavy” leather. Gay Leather hard media uniform, composed of black leather motorcycle jacket, boots, chaps, belt, cap, and, very importantly, butch attitude (LA&M)

Soft media materials are generally absent from the early Gay Leather style, and it is interesting to note that the boundaries of the early gay leather subculture were to some degree maintained by the explicit exclusion of materials with feminine connotations. Many leather events and clubs enforced dress codes that prohibited items of clothing such as “dress shirts, sandals, sneakers, cologne, women’s clothes” (Rubin 1994, p. 32). Materials and activities associated with effeminate homosexuality, such as drag queens, were especially suspect in most settings in the early gay leather subculture.

Such rules, later formalized and enforced in organizational contexts such as leather bars, served to establish and standardize conventions of the style. Beyond a superficial level, participation in the subculture required acquisition of the appropriate uniform, and conformity to established conventions of the style—whether or not one was interested in leather costume.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ I experienced this myself when, on my very first day of fieldwork, I was taken to a leather shop by Chuck Renslow and fitted with the appropriate uniform.

5.12 Gay Erotica: “Butch” Antecedents and Leather

In further contrast to the American Fetish style, erotica and erotica producers played an ancillary role in the development of the early Gay Leather style. This is chiefly a matter of timing. Although occasional examples can be found as early as the late 1940's, motorcycle leather was rare in gay erotica until the early 1960's.²⁶¹ American production of explicit, gay-oriented, leather images began on the West Coast in the late-1950's, although elements of the leather style are found as early as 1954. These images appeared in the physique photography, or “beefcake” genre—the dominant form of gay erotica during the 1950's and early 1960's (cf. Hooven 1993, 1995; Waugh 1996). In this section I briefly review the origins and development of leather as a motif in gay erotica.

The American beefcake genre has its roots in the physical culture movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the early twentieth century, now famous individuals such as Charles Atlas (1892-1972) and Joe Weider, and their less well-known predecessor Bernarr Macfadden (1868-1955), were among the founders of a distinct category of publications extolling health, fitness, and the body. In the post-World War II period gay photographers entered this market as independent producers and developed a distinct genre of

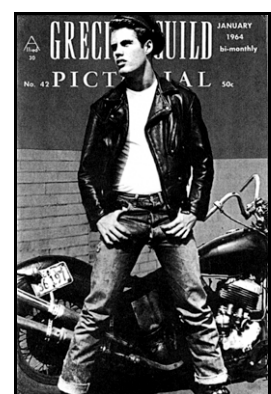


Figure 138: MC Leather—a common motif in gay erotica by the mid-1960's. Cover of *Grecian Guild Pictorial* magazine, Jan 1964 (PC)

²⁶¹ The earliest known producer of gay erotica with a motorcycle leather theme was not American but British: Tom Nicholl of Scott Studio in London, who produced homoerotic photographs in MC leather from the late 1940's (Hooven 1995, p. 95).

homoerotic “physique” mail-order photography studios and, from 1953, magazines.²⁶² Gay producers appropriated many of the symbols and motifs of the preexisting physique genre, but produced work that was subtly yet clearly homoerotic in nature. These were avidly consumed by countless numbers of gay men during the mid-century period (cf. Waugh 1996).

Leather represented a new motif in the physique genre, but there are important continuities with antecedent themes in gay erotica that help to explain the popularity of leather during the 1960’s. These antecedent themes strongly resonate with an aesthetic of masculine homosexuality, and illustrate the importance of the “butch” aesthetic among gay men. They include the cowboy, jock, gladiator, soldier, cop, and master-slave. Leather, when it appeared in the late 1950’s, fit nicely as a new niche in this repertoire of masculine representational motifs.²⁶³ The rapid development of the genre in gay erotica suggests that leather had even stronger resonance with an aesthetic of masculine gay sexuality than its antecedents. Leather was certainly more radical and current than traditional themes, such as the gladiator.

A number of physique photography studios nationwide began to employ leather themes by the mid-1960’s. For the purpose of this analysis I focus on the two key publishers of Gay

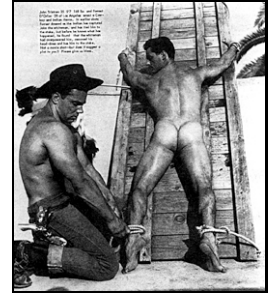


Figure 139: Cowboy domination and submission—one stylistic antecedent to leather in the gay physique genre. *Physique Pictorial*, v. 8, no. 3, 1958 (PC)

²⁶² This group has pre-war antecedents that are addressed in the literature. Waugh discusses a first generation of “crypto-gay” physique photographers that emerged during the 1930’s (cf. Waugh 1996, p. 208-209).

Leather erotica in the physique genre: the first known American publisher of Gay Leather erotica, the Athletic Model Guild of Los Angeles, and Kris Studio of Chicago (discussed below, p. 251). These two cases engage the two most prolific producers of erotica in the Gay Leather style through 1971, and provide a developmental timeline that is generalizable to the genre overall.

5.121 Bob Mizer: the Athletic Model Guild, *Physique Pictorial*, and Tom of Finland

Bob Mizer (1922-1992), “Secretary” of the Athletic Model Guild (AMG), was one of the earliest producers of leather erotic representations in the physique genre. The AMG, in operation by 1947, was initially established as a modeling agency but quickly shifted to mail-order sales of nude and semi-nude men (Hooven 1995, p. 26-28).²⁶⁴ In 1951 Mizer expanded his product line with the publication of *Physique Pictorial*, a magazine format catalog of photographs (Hooven 1995, p. 34). The magazine contained photographs of men in various poses and costumes, which were accompanied by ordering information and biographical descriptions of the model. *Physique Pictorial* also contained some of the best artwork in the physique genre. Mizer commissioned work from (and helped to establish) some of the most outstanding gay artists of



Figure 140: *Physique Pictorial*'s first MC leather cover, Nov. 1961. Drawing by Tom of Finland (KIRSGR)

²⁶³ I thank Dr. Anthony DeBlase for explaining the connection between leather and its non-leather antecedents in the physique literature.

²⁶⁴ For future scholars: between 1948 and 1956, Mizer and Alfred Kinsey exchanged 59 letters, currently held at KIRSGR. KIRSGR also holds an extensive collection of *Physique Pictorial* and other physique publications.

the day, including George Quaintance, Dom Orejudos (discussed below), and Tom of Finland. *Physique Pictorial* became one of the longest running and best known of the physique magazines.

The explicit use of leather costume in *Physique Pictorial* provides a good indication of the development of Gay Leather as a theme in gay erotica. A review of issues of *Physique Pictorial* held at the Kinsey Institute library revealed the following timeline: the first elements of the Gay Leather style to appear in *Physique Pictorial* were levis and boots, which appeared in drawings by “Art-Bob,” a frequent but unknown contributor to the magazine. These appeared in the Winter 1953 issue. Levi-boot photographs appeared in the Summer 1956 issue, and a model clad only in levis and engineer boots was the cover photo of the Summer 1957 issue. Photographs of leather motorcycle jackets did not appear until the Summer 1958 issue. By the early 1960’s, however, motorcycle leather became a common theme and cover image for *Physique Pictorial*. As noted above, this was several years after the leather style had been appropriated in motorcycle clubs and bars.

Through *Physique Pictorial*, Mizer introduced one of the most prominent artists in the Gay Leather style: Touko Laaksonen (1920-1991), a Finnish artist dubbed “Tom of Finland” by Mizer (because of the difficulty of his name for English speakers). Tom of Finland was first published in the Spring 1957 issue of *Physique Pictorial* (a masculine but not leather drawing), and thereafter was a contributor to many issues of the magazine. During the late 1950’s and 1960’s,

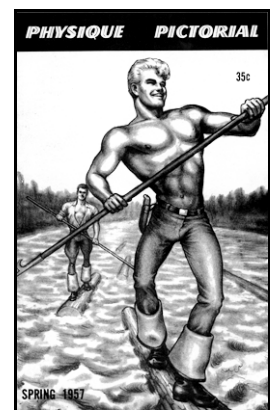


Figure 141: Tom of Finland's first published work, 1957 (PC)

approximately two hundred of his drawings were published by Mizer (Hooven 1993, p. 98). By the early 1960's, explicit Gay Leather drawings by Tom of Finland would appear on the cover of *Physique Pictorial*, as well as a number of other physique magazines. Tom of Finland's work—particularly his association of leather with passionate gay sexuality—helped to spark the fantasies of succeeding generations of gay men.



Figure 142: Tom of Finland. Back cover of *Physique Pictorial's* Nov. 1961 issue. (KIRSGR)

5.2 New York City: Early Gay SM Networks, Bars

The case of New York and, slightly later, Chicago, highlight regional differences in the development of the leather subculture. Whereas in California SM practitioners were a component of a broader biker-leather subculture, available evidence indicates that in New York City it was specifically SM practitioners that were the vanguard of the new leather style. Gay SM practitioners were the early adopters of the motorcycle leather uniform, and early leaders of the gay leather subculture in New York. The configuration of key organizational forms was also different in New York than California. Gay motorcycle clubs, central in the development of the California scene, did not form in New York until the mid-1960's—a full decade after an identifiable “leather” subculture emerged. In New York informal social networks were the earliest social-organizational form, supplemented later by an unstable system of leather bars.

New York City had a small, informally networked gay SM subculture for several years before “leather” became its dominant motif. SM Contacts during the early 1950's were primarily direct, through underground, informal networks of gay SM practitioners. Some contacts were also mediated through personal ads located in magazines such as *Justice Weekly*, a Canadian tabloid frequently cited in gay



Figure 143: *Justice Weekly*, June 13, 1959 (PG)

oral histories.²⁶⁵ Early contacts proceeded without the repertoire of symbols associated with California-style biker leather, which were not appropriated by East Coast SM practitioners until the mid-1950's. Referring to the late 1940's and early 1950's in Boston and New York, Bob Milne, an early leader of New York's gay SM subculture, recalled:²⁶⁶

There were no signs since there was no clothing, there were no clothing symbols...nothing like keys or handkerchiefs or anything, there were no jackets, there was nothing, no boots, nothing.

Evidence concerning informal networking among gay SM practitioners in New York City dates from the early 1950's. In its earliest manifestation, organized gay SM was structured in social circles centered on key practitioners who sponsored private play parties and facilitated local contacts. Through the period of this dissertation there were a handful of such leaders in New York City. These men were known not only locally, but were also key regional nodes in a small network of gay SM practitioners that was national in scope. Knowledgeable practitioners provided referrals to network leaders in other cities, who tended to know each other. This network, referenced in numerous oral histories addressing the period, was extremely important from the mid-1950's in the development of gay SM.

²⁶⁵ *Justice Weekly* was published in Toronto (according to Rubin, the magazine was first published in 1945). In her fieldwork focusing on the development of gay leather, Rubin encountered several references to *Justice Weekly* highlighting its role as a contact medium (Rubin 1994, p. 92-93).

For future scholars: KIRSGR has the following issues of *Justice Weekly*, located in the JTAB section: v. 14 (1957) to v. 27 (1972). Volumes 17 (1962) to 27 are complete. These are not currently listed in the on-line catalog.

²⁶⁶ Rubin interview with Bob Milne, October 6, 1979, p. 10. Transcript courtesy of Gayle Rubin.

Bob Milne, quoted above, was a center of New York's gay SM scene during its immediate "pre-leather" period.²⁶⁷ Milne moved to New York in 1950 on probation following a conviction for running a "house of ill-fame" in Boston, where his penchant for SM sex earned him considerable notoriety.²⁶⁸ He had been arrested and convicted for engaging in consensual homosexual acts in his home.²⁶⁹ During the three years that he first lived in New York City, from 1950 to 1953, when he left because of an obscenity prosecution, the indefatigable Milne became a center of SM networks in the city and sponsored play parties in a house that he owned. He was well known within and outside of New York.

In 1960 an account of one of these parties was published by an eyewitness, the Reverend Robert Wood, who visited Milne's play parties on several occasions. Milne read from Wood's text, adding commentary, during a 1982 presentation addressing gay SM in New York City during the 1950's. The transcript of this presentation provides a fascinating glimpse at NYC gay SM *before* it adopted the "leather" motif.²⁷⁰

...I'll read you one brief passage from this book, which is called Christ and the Homosexual. It was printed in 1960. However, it refers to the early 1950s, and to this house which I owned and operated simply as an apartment house. I lived in it, and had other regular straight tenants in it. But this is supposedly Reverend Wood's version of what he saw in my place when he came there.

"A Sado-Masochistic Homosexual Session."²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ Milne information in this section was provided by him during an April 21, 1982 general meeting of the Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA), NYC. Transcript courtesy of SMSMA and Gayle Rubin.

²⁶⁸ Milne's commitment to SM is beyond dispute. He once refused bail because he heard that the jail in which he was incarcerated offered prisoners particularly rough treatment (GMSMA 1982, p. 13).

²⁶⁹ SMSMA 1982, p. 3-4.

²⁷⁰ SMSMA 1982, p. 6-9. Formatting as in original. Single brackets and text (" []") are in the original transcript; double brackets ("[[...]]") indicate my edits in this selection.

²⁷¹ Original in Wood 1960, p. 33-34. The SMSMA transcript has slight variations from the original.

“You have not been to this house before nor do you know your host, but tonight will be a night you shall never forget. A night of horror, torn from the pages of the *Inferno* itself. You ring the doorbell at an ordinary-looking house on an ordinary-looking street of any metropolis in America.” This of course was New York. [laughter] “A young man in casual attire graciously opens the door and after identifying yourself, you are welcomed into the long, overly decorated foyer.” It’s a lie. It was pitch black. [laughter] Nothing faggoty there, believe me. [...] “At the other end you were ushered through a second door, expecting to enter a living room atmosphere. Instead, you were at the head of the stairs with a bright light spotting you against the wall. For a moment you are startled and blinded. A full story below your feet is a writhing mass of males, which does not let your arrival lessen in the least its orgy of homosexual sado-masochistic debauchery.” [audience: Ohhhh...laughter]

“As you slowly descend the open staircase, your senses are assaulted and simultaneously stimulated or repulsed. Life-size obscene pictures have been chalked on the back walls.” There were pictures. These were Steve Masters, Mike Miksche’s chalk drawings.²⁷² “A form of fear you have never known before begins to invade your nerves. Yet some fascination compels you to stay and behold. Never, you think, has there been a sight like this. In the corner by the two-story fireplace is a young man, his nude body tied spread-eagled to four hooks in the wall, his back pressed against the roughened plaster. About him is tied a piece of rawhide which holds a pair of cowboy boots several inches off the floor.” Just an aside. [...] as you notice, he very carefully did not say “tied around the cock” or anything. If he had, this book probably would have been banned. [...]

“Another man dressed only in very tight jeans is pouring water into the boots to make them heavier as they dangle from the [victim?]. When he pleads for the water-pourer to stop, he receives the full force of a garrison belt across his chest. Locked with leg-irons to the hearthstone is a sailor, whose uniform has been opened to reveal most of his body. He has already been branded on one arm by the hot poker, and is now being threatened to have it applied in a more sensitive spot if he does not succumb to the desires of the rough kid dressed only in chaps.” Actually, the leather part was very minuscule, because most people didn’t wear leather then. They didn’t even have it. They were into the scene, but they didn’t really have much leather. “On the man-sized wooden coffee table, which looks more like a low operating table, is another naked male chained face-down, whose back already bares the bloody outline of a well-applied cat-o-nine-tails. A lighted candle has been inserted in the prostrate form.” Again, he doesn’t say ass. [laughter] “A minute more, it will extinguish itself in a pool of burning wax on the masochist’s body.”

You are now standing at the foot of the stairs, too terrified and too bewildered to move. The air is livid with abusive language. The youth with the dangling boots is screaming to stop, and in return is receiving another whack of the belt. You are aware of the odors of sex, leather, rubber, and burned flesh. You wonder if Dante himself had ever experienced such a horror perpetrated in the name of sexual excitement. You wince when you hear the crack of the bullwhip from another room, but are unable to see the unfortunate boy who has just screamed.

²⁷² Spelling corrected from original. Miksche, an early gay SM artist, is discussed in Steward 1991; Rubin 1994, p. 113-116.



Figure 144: Mike Miksche, (aka "Steve Masters") drawing, 1961. (PC)

“After a while, the participants in the orgiastic scenes grow tired, or sexually satisfied, and they give up their positions to later arrivals and go into the kitchen for a beer.” [laughter and applause] I’m not writing this! The Reverend Robert is writing this. “After blood, sweat and tears are wiped away, you discover that these are all attractive, well-mannered, educated men in their twenties and thirties. “

Many of these “well-mannered men” slightly later adopted the California biker uniform, and congregated in a number of New York City bars that became progressively more “leather” in orientation.

Leather bars developed in New York City during the mid-1950’s, and constituted the second stage of development of the nascent gay leather subculture. The first “leather-friendly” bar highlighted in oral histories is *Shaw’s*, a mixed bar.²⁷³ Drawing from multiple sources, Rubin dates the opening of Shaw’s circa 1953 (Rubin 1994, p. 126). The *Lodge* opened slightly

²⁷³ On Shaw’s as NYC’s first leather-friendly bar, see Rinella interview with Frank Olson, June 27, 1984 (LA&M); GMSMA 1982, p. 1; Rubin 1994, p. 122.

later, circa 1954, followed by *the Big Dollar* (c. 1959), a dedicated leather bar (ibid.).

The Lodge is cited as the first bar to have a “minor dress code” that was increasingly stringent as the night progressed. The manager of the Lodge would stand by the door and screen prospective patrons. The dress code at that time consisted of leather motorcycle jackets, the first piece of leather attire widely appropriated by gay SM practitioners in New York City, followed later in the 1950’s by leather vests and chaps.²⁷⁴ During the ten year period from 1954 to 1964, when all leather bars in New York City were closed as part of a city crack-down in preparation for the 1964 World’s Fair (Rubin 1994, p. 126), a number of additional dedicated leather bars emerged.

After Bob Milne’s departure from New York in 1953, Frank Olson became the center of SM social circles and the national network. According to Olson, networking via telephone and, from the mid-1950’s, direct contacts at leather-friendly bars, were the primary mechanisms used to enter and sustain the gay leather network. Olson played a key role in opening local bars to the early leather scene. Prior to the decisive city shutdown of gay and leather bars in 1964, the infrastructure of bars supporting the small leather subculture was relatively unstable. Olson coordinated with bar owners to arrange a succession of bars willing to host New York leathermen. These changed for various reasons, ranging from closures to evictions of the leather crowd, and during the early 1960’s Olson “led the crowd from one bar to another, like Moses through the wilderness” (Rubin 1994, p. 127). Like Milne, Olson hosted private play parties for gay SM practitioners. These parties, located at the Fire Island resort close to New York City, began in 1959 and became increasingly important

²⁷⁴ Preceding description of The Lodge is drawn from Rinella interview with Frank Olson, June 27, 1994 (LA&M).

during the early and mid-1960's period of police persecution of the bars. Various sources indicate that early leather bars were "Mafia owned."²⁷⁵ The first leather bar known to be owned by practitioners in New York City was the *Eagle*, which was opened by Frank Olson and five associates in 1970.

The external economy supporting the early Gay Leather style in New York City included, in addition to the bars, sources for leather goods and paraphernalia. During the 1950's, gay men obtained such items from country-western stores and theatrical goods stores such as "Uncle Sam's Umbrella Shop."²⁷⁶ Customized leatherwork, such as placing studs in belts or jackets, was largely done at home by practitioners during the 1950's. Gay SM practitioners in New York and elsewhere gradually elaborated the basic motorcycle uniform, creating designs associated with the Gay Leather style such as studded harnesses.

Gay motorcycle clubs based on the California model developed much later on the East Coast. The first gay motorcycle club in New York, the Empire City MC, was formed in 1964 and was a gay social club, not a sex club. The club, like its California antecedents, held organized "runs" where members of the club would ride together to festivities held in locations such as Cape Cod. Frank Olson later became president of the Empire City MC. The first New York MC known to have an explicit SM orientation was The New York Motor

²⁷⁵ ibid.

²⁷⁶ Uncle Sam's Umbrella Shop was located at 110 West 45th Street, New York City. A brochure from the early 1960's (c. 1964) advertises a variety of umbrellas, walking canes, and also a small selection of whips, riding crops, and "popular riding accessories." Their brochure reads, "Our excellent selection of unique items are not meant to hurt . . . merely frighten. Especially if the animals you are riding are in charge of the situation" (KIRSGR vertical file, *Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Cent. 1960-)* *Uncle Sam Umbrella Shop*). Rubin's interview with Milne (1979, p. 55) indicates that by 1979 there were three branches of the store in NYC.



Figure 145: Gold Coast poster by Etienne (Dom Orejudos) (LA&M)

Bike Club, founded in 1967.²⁷⁷ A third club, the Cycle MC was founded in April 1968 (Ridinger 1997).

5.3 Chicago: Chuck Renslow, the *Gold Coast* and *Kris Studio*

Chicago was the third major city to develop an organized gay leather subculture, following Los Angeles and New York by approximately four years. Chicago's leather subculture developed in an environment characterized by organizational and political stability unmatched in Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco. This stability is partially explained by the continuous and central presence of gay entrepreneur Chuck Renslow (b. 1929), his partner Dom Orejudos (1933-1991), and their associates. From the early 1950's to today, the Renslow "family" has been involved in multiple, overlapping, and very successful businesses connected with gay and leather life in Chicago. Because of this centrality, the history of the early Chicago leather subculture is

²⁷⁷ The New York Motor Bike Club published a newsletter entitled "Black and Blue." KIRSGR holds several issues; see the vertical file folder: *Homosexual Publications — Black and Blue*.

largely a history of Chuck Renslow and his associates.²⁷⁸ There is virtually no aspect of this development in which Renslow was not involved in some way.

As in New York, SM practitioners were the early leaders and organizers of the leather subculture in Chicago. “Leather,” when it emerged as a subcultural stylistic marker in Chicago during the mid-to-late 1950’s, had clear connotations of dominant and submissive sexuality—which would later be referred to as SM. The medical terms “sadism,” “masochism,” and “sadomasochism” were seldom used by early practitioners. As Chuck Renslow noted:²⁷⁹

You have to understand this was in the 50's. We didn't even know what leather was. The connection was sadomasochism. You didn't even think of it as sadomasochism. You thought of it as dominant and passive.

As the leather subculture in Chicago developed organizationally, it would broaden to include the mix of SM practitioners, leather fetishists, and butch gays who were neither, that was found in other locations. In the early years, however, SM was the central theme of the gay “leather” subculture in Chicago.

Chicago gay SM had a “pre-leather” period followed by a leather period that commenced in the mid-1950’s. The two periods are bridged by Samuel Steward (1909-1993), who is the source of the earliest information regarding gay SM in Chicago during the 1930’s and 1940’s.²⁸⁰ Steward’s life intersected

²⁷⁸ Since the 1950’s Renslow has headed an extended “family” of individuals, mostly but not restricted to gay men, who have lived and worked together in a communal arrangement. This is reflected in Renslow’s businesses, which today have the corporate title “Renslow Family Enterprises.” I was graciously hosted by the Renslow family on several occasions while doing fieldwork in Chicago.

²⁷⁹ Rinella interview with Renslow, June 14, 1994; see also Rinella-Renslow interview, July 29, 1994; Rinella interview with Cliff Raven, 15 June 1995

²⁸⁰ Steward has an unusual biography. He completed his Ph.D. in English Literature at Ohio State University in 1934, and came to Chicago in 1936 to teach English at Loyola University. He took a two year leave of absence beginning in 1947 to work as editor on a major revision of the World Book Encyclopedia, and then took a position at De Paul University. Increasingly disaffected with academic life, in 1952 Steward, using the pseudonym Phil

with those of some of the more interesting individuals in the twentieth century, most prominently Alfred Kinsey and the Parisian artistic circle surrounding Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas (cf. Steward 1977, 1981). In 1948 Steward met and was interviewed by Kinsey, and his personal sex history extended to an extraordinary five hours. Kinsey was fascinated by Steward's meticulous record keeping of his sexual adventures—Steward kept a “stud file” of 3X5 cards detailing each of his encounters (Steward 1981, p. 96-97). Kinsey enlisted Steward as a consultant and Steward maintained an active relationship with the Institute for Sex Research that continued to Kinsey's death in 1956.²⁸¹

According to Steward, SM was a recognized category of underground gay life in Chicago dating from the 1930's, and was referenced using coded language such as “Sadie Mazie” for SM.²⁸² Gay SM at that time was not socially organized, and the complex iconography and subcultural norms used later to guide SM encounters did not yet exist. Steward noted during a 1982 interview:²⁸³

There was no crowd as there is today. There were isolated individuals who might tie you up and beat the hell out of you. Ah but it was dangerous. And you didn't know in the early days, even as late as the forties, you didn't .. ah ... there was no codification of it. No ritualization of SM as there is today. It was catch as catch can. But ... ah ... Sadie Mazzies were looked down on by all of us ordinary, normal homosexuals

Sparrow, began to work part-time as a professional tattoo artist in Chicago. He quit his teaching position in 1954 to work full-time as a tattooist. In 1965 he moved to San Francisco, where he continued to tattoo until 1970 (Steward 1981, p. 92). Although he quit academe, Steward retained connections in the literary world and published several non-fiction books and articles, as well as a number of works of gay erotic fiction using the pseudonym Phil Andros.

²⁸¹ Information pertaining to Steward's relationship with Alfred Kinsey is drawn exclusively from published accounts by Steward (1981, 1991) and Rubin (1994).

²⁸² Interestingly, variations on the term “Sadie Mazie” are found in heterosexual erotica during the 1950's, but likely fell out of common usage among gays, at least in Chicago, during this period. I have encountered no evidence that this term was used by the 1950's generation of gay men that formed Chicago's organized leather subculture.

²⁸³ Gregory Sprague interview with Samuel Steward, May 20, 1982 (LA&M).

in the twenties and the thirties. We thought that was too extravagant. And that didn't that happened only in Berlin!

Chicago gay SM developed an organizational infrastructure and appropriated the biker leather motif during the mid-1950's, under the leadership of Chuck Renslow. Renslow met Steward when he entered Steward's tattoo shop, circa 1952. According to interviews with both Renslow and Steward, it was Steward who introduced the young Chuck Renslow to SM.²⁸⁴ Renslow noted that at the time he met Steward, "I didn't know a damn thing about S&M..."²⁸⁵ This condition quickly changed. Around the time of this encounter Renslow developed a taste for SM and began to pick up men for rough sex at Bughouse Square, a gay cruising area in Chicago.²⁸⁶

Steward also linked Renslow to the established network of gay SM practitioners, by introducing him to Bob Milne in New York City.²⁸⁷ Steward had been linked to the New York circle, which in 1952 was centered around Milne, at least since 1949. During that year Steward had been introduced to Mike Miksche, the New York artist who decorated Milne's party room. This introduction took place in Bloomington, Indiana, when Alfred Kinsey brought Steward and Miksche together in order to make a documentary film on gay SM.²⁸⁸ As pointed out by Rubin (1994, p. 116), in doing so Kinsey likely

²⁸⁴ Evans interview with Samuel Steward, July 2, 1983; George interview with Chuck Renslow (1987) (both held at LA&M).

²⁸⁵ George interview with Chuck Renslow, February 1987 (LA&M)

²⁸⁶ "Bughouse Square" is actually Washington Square in Chicago, located across from the Newberry Library. It was a center of gay cruising during the late 1940's and 1950's. In addition to gay cruising, the park also was a frequent site of soapbox oratory, by individuals commonly regarded as "nuts." Hence the name "bughouse" (Rinella interview with Renslow, June 14, 1994. LA&M).

²⁸⁷ Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow (b), August 30, 1996.

²⁸⁸ The Kinsey documentary films have been acknowledged at least since Pomeroy's *Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research* ([1972] 1982, cf. p. 174-181). Of these films, the encounter between Steward and Miksche is probably the most frequently referenced in published literatures: the two participants are cited by name in Steward 1981, p. 101-103, 1991; and Rubin 1994, p. 113.

played a “small, if unwitting, role” in the social-organizational development of the emerging gay leather subculture.²⁸⁹ Once introduced to SM and linked to established practitioner networks via Steward, Renslow quickly developed as the social and commercial center of gay SM in Chicago.²⁹⁰

5.31 The Gold Coast

Renslow’s most direct contribution to the early development of the Gay Leather subculture was the *Gold Coast*, the midwest’s first leather bar. The Gold Coast leather bar opened in June 1958²⁹¹ and remained open until February 10, 1988. The bar became the center of the early gay leather subculture in the midwest, and a leather institution that was internationally known.

The history of the Gold Coast begins with a small group of gay SM practitioners, including Renslow, who appropriated the California biker uniform around the time that *The Wild One* was released. Like consultants interviewed by Rubin, Renslow specifically recalls that the film and its masculine, radical imagery had a significant impact on the style of this group.²⁹² In 1957 Cliff Raven, a friend of Renslow who had recently moved to Chicago, suggested that they bring together a group of friends who were

²⁸⁹ It is possible that another contact linked Steward to the early New York SM network, but the Miksche connection is the most likely link to Milne and his social circle.

²⁹⁰ Renslow himself, with tattoo artist and Steward protégé Cliff Raven, was later (during the late 1950’s) to perform in a documentary film made by the Kinsey Institute (Bienvenu interview with Renslow (a), January 25, 1996; also mentioned in Waugh 1996, p. 394).

²⁹¹ The June, 1958 date is given in DeBlase 1996; Rinella (1996) also dates the Gold Coast’s opening as a leather bar in 1958. Rubin dated the *Gold Coast*’s opening in 1960 (1994, p. 143). Given the primary source material, which is primarily oral histories rather than documentary evidence, it is impossible to determine most dates with complete certainty. However, my evaluation of the Renslow timeline leads me to concur with DeBlase and Rinella that 1958 is the most probable date.



Figure 146: Chuck Renslow
hosting a Gold Coast event, c.
1980's (LA&M)

interested in SM and meet in a local bar.²⁹³ Renslow agreed, and an initial group of about five men was formed.

The group began to meet on Friday evenings at Omar's, a downtown bar on Clark and Madison. After approximately one month the manager of the bar evicted the small leather group, and the friends moved to a bar at the Lane Motel, located across the street from Bughouse Square. This was also short-lived: the Lane Motel bar closed about three weeks after the leather contingent arrived. The group emigrated to the Hi-Ho bar (today called Friar Tuck) on Broadway. During the Hi-Ho period, which lasted several months, the group expanded to approximately 20-30 men. This ended when the owner sold the bar, and the new owners promptly evicted the leather contingent. The group then moved to a bar

called the Gold Coast Show Lounge, on the corner of Elm and Clark in Chicago.

²⁹² See references in footnote 259, p. 226 above.

²⁹³ Raven moved to Chicago in 1957 after finishing college. Illustrating the methodological problems inherent in oral histories, in his interview with Jack Rinella, Raven firmly states that the formation of his friendship with Chuck Renslow, and his suggestion to Renslow that they form a leather group, occurred in 1959. This was after a vacation to New York, which Raven clearly remembered as occurring in 1959. However, Raven also remembered that he was "involved" with Renslow prior to Renslow's purchase of Irv Johnson's gym in Chicago (discussed below). This purchase is a documented date: it occurred in May 1958 (Rinella 1996). Raven's first encounter with Renslow likely occurred shortly after he moved to Chicago following college graduation in 1957.

The owner of the Gold Coast welcomed the business that accompanied the new leather clientele.²⁹⁴

The group had been meeting at the Gold Coast for several months when the owner of the Gold Coast died. The owner's son approached Renslow, the leader of the group, and asked if he would be interested in purchasing the bar. Renslow agreed and for a period of time the leather group took over management of the bar. The purchase was delayed due to complications involved with obtaining appropriate licenses. Once this was resolved, Renslow and two partners, including Cliff Raven, became owners of the Gold Coast. This most likely occurred in 1960. The day-to-day operation of the bar was accomplished jointly, with partners taking turns as nightly supervisors.²⁹⁵ From the time the group took over management of the bar, the Gold Coast was run as a gay leather bar—with clear SM connotations. Self-consciously creating a home for the fledgling subculture, Renslow and his partners enforced a strict dress code that required leather clothing. The bar was decorated with a biker leather motif, with leather murals painted directly on the walls by Dom Orejudos.

Through its twenty-nine year history, the Gold Coast had a total of five locations. Circa 1960 the lease of the Gold Coast building expired, and the owner attempted to increase the rent drastically. The partners moved the bar to 1110 North Clark, down the street from the first location. During the moving process Renslow and Orejudos smeared the original wall murals with paint-thinner, in order to ensure that the old location was not set up as a competing

²⁹⁴ On the formation of the initial group of leathermen in Chicago and the pre-Gold Coast sequence of bars, see Rinella interviews with Cliff Raven (June 15, 1995), Wayne Glaser (pseudonym, September 30, 1996), Chuck Renslow (14 June and 29 July 1994); George interview with Renslow (1987). The general sequence given above reflects the points of convergence in oral histories cited.

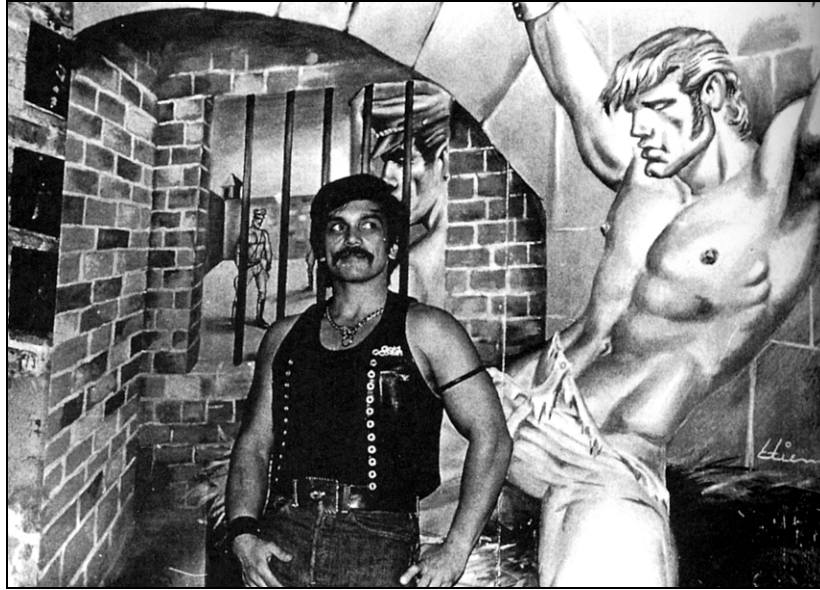


Figure 147: Dom Orejudos and one of his Gold Coast murals (LA&M)

leather bar. Henceforth, Orejudos murals used in the Gold Coast were painted on movable plywood and masonite—these newer murals moved with the bar to subsequent locations, and today are found in the Chicago Eagle leather bar, owned by Chuck Renslow.²⁹⁶

Circa 1963 the second building was purchased by a car dealership located across the street and the Gold Coast was again forced to move. The partners took over an already existing bar located at 2265 North Lincoln. The area was rapidly developing as a straight nightclub area, and the leather clientele “really didn’t like it.”²⁹⁷ After approximately two years the bar was moved again. One of Renslow’s partners remained in the 2265 North Lincoln building and opened a German restaurant, the Red Baron, and Renslow took the Gold

²⁹⁵ Rinella interview with Cliff Raven, June 15, 1995 (LA&M).

²⁹⁶ Orejudos was one of the first artists to work in the new Gay Leather style, and his murals provide good illustrations of early work in the genre. On the Orejudos murals, see George Busse interview with Dom Orejudos (no date); Bill Christy interview with Orejudos, March 1, 1983; Rinella interviews with Renslow, June 14, 1994, April 6, 1995. All are held at LA&M. The Orejudos murals are at least briefly mentioned in many interviews held at LA&M.

²⁹⁷ Rinella interview with Renslow, October 26, 1994 (LA&M).

Coast to 501 North Clark.²⁹⁸ Although technically a Gold Coast location existed during this transitional period, the bar was closed for approximately three months while the 501 North Clark location was prepared.²⁹⁹ During this period Renslow sponsored weekly parties at his home to maintain the leather group.

It was at the North Clark location that the Gold Coast fully developed as a leather institution. Renslow selected a site “right near the downtown area, a little area just off the Loop that was ... in nothing but parking lots.”³⁰⁰ (Rubin, p. 18). The building, originally a warehouse, was customized by Renslow and eventually included an upstairs bar area and a more serious downstairs “pit.” Leather attire was formalized in a “heavy code” of leather/levi or military uniform that was posted on a sign leading down into the pit.³⁰¹ Staple items in the mid-1960’s were leather jackets, boots, and chaps. Although the crowd was friendly, the appearance of the bar was intentionally designed to be rough and menacing. The bar countertops were sandblasted, and the ceiling painted to appear to be crumbling. Orejudo’s distinctive leather-SM murals decorated the walls. The bar was extensively advertised outside of Chicago, although not locally, and attracted an international clientele.

A number of organizations supporting the leather community formed around the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast was the first site of Male Hide Leathers, a leather shop still in existence today, that opened at the 501 North Clark location. The Gold Coast was also the home bar for Chicago’s first gay

²⁹⁸ Renslow eventually became sole owner of the Gold Coast. Incorporation papers dated 1963 list Renslow as owner (Jack Rinella personal communication, October 10, 1997).

²⁹⁹ This is a necessary qualification to the claim that the Gold Coast operated continuously from 1958 to 1988. This period is discussed in Rinella interviews with Patrick Finnegan Renslow (December 27, 1994) and Chuck Renslow (December 29, 1994), held at LA&M.

³⁰⁰ Gayle Rubin interview with Chuck Renslow, July 25, 1991 (LA&M).

motorcycle club, the Second City Motorcycle Club, which was formally chartered in September 1965. Renslow was the first president.³⁰² The club was a gay social club that, like other MC's, would sponsor runs—one of the first was to an Indiana farmhouse owned by a gay farmer. This event turned wild and became “an S&M orgy out in the woods.”³⁰³ Renslow recalled:³⁰⁴

Yes, it was on a farm in Indiana and ... some farmer gay farmer ... ah ... that was the first run [...] the first motorcycle run. And we all slept in the barn. We slept outside. There was a mass orgy outside. I mean, a mass orgy! People were fucking all over the place. Ah ... almost burned down the barn. We didn't, but we almost did.

Renslow suggests that such events were the foundation for the Chicago Hellfire Club, founded in August, 1971. The Chicago Hellfire Club (CHC) was created for the express purpose of facilitating SM sex and was a radically different kind of organization. Since 1976 CHC has sponsored annual “Inferno” runs, which today are elaborate and large scale SM conventions, running over several days, that occur in secluded rural areas. In contrast, the vast majority of motorcycle clubs are social and fraternal, not sex, organizations. CHC represented a milestone in the development of the SM component of the gay leather subculture, and served as a precedent for future organizations and meetings.

The Gold Coast also supported the development of broader gay institutions in Chicago. Renslow commented that if the authorities “...knew the amount of money that came out of the Gold Coast to finance other stuff, they would have probably tried to close it.”³⁰⁵ Most of these organizational activities, many of which were directed toward the economic and political development of the broader gay community rather than the gay leather

³⁰¹ Rinella interview with Renslow, December 29, 1994 (LA&M).

³⁰² Rinella interview with Renslow, June 14, 1994 (LA&M).

³⁰³ Rinella interview with Renslow, July 29, 1994 (LA&M).

³⁰⁴ Rinella interview with Renslow, April 6, 1995 (LA&M).

³⁰⁵ Rinella interview with Renslow, December 29, 1994b (LA&M).

subculture in particular, occurred after the period addressed in this dissertation.

Taken in the context of the overall development of the Gay Leather subculture in the United States (and despite frequent moves in its early years), the Gold Coast was by far the most stable institution in the emerging leather subculture. It provided a continuous meeting place and served as a precedent for later bars in Chicago and other locations.³⁰⁶ This did not occur by chance: Renslow deftly managed a variety of economic, political, and other perils that threatened the business. For example, unlike other areas such as New York and San Francisco, in Chicago Renslow had few problems with the police. This was due to an intentionally low profile (e.g., no local advertising), regular payoffs, and, Renslow suggests, ignorance on the part of the police about the true nature of the bar. Renslow noted (Rinella interview with Renslow, 6 April 1995):

They [the police] just left ... they just really, really left it alone. I honestly believe ... and I know this sounds naive, but talking to policemen and all of that in the district, I think they thought it was a tough biker bar. You know, I don't really think they stopped to think that it was a gay S & M bar. I honestly don't. And they just left it alone.

Like all bar owners in the Chicago area during the 1950's and 60's, Renslow was also required to pay protection fees to the Mafia. The alternative was, in a realistic worst-case scenario (that did occur in Chicago), to be killed. Renslow commented, "The syndicate was involved in every step of every operation that I had. Now just so you understand this! Knowing from other bar owners, this is the way it was in the City of Chicago." (Rinella interview with Renslow, November 19, 1994; LA&M). As police corruption and Mafia control of Chicago's bar market eased, these dual payoffs eventually ended.

³⁰⁶ Prior to its opening, a co-founder of the New York Eagle, the first gay-owned leather bar in New York, consulted Renslow for advice on how to operate and market a leather bar (Bienvenu interview with Renslow, January 25, 1996).

5.32 Kris Studio and *Mars* magazine

Homoerotic physique photography was a second thread of development in the history of the Gay Leather style in Chicago, and here too Renslow was a central figure. With Los Angeles, Chicago was one of the early centers of the homoerotic “beefcake” genre. One of the first gay physique magazines, *Tomorrow’s Man*, was published by Chicago gym owner and entrepreneur Irv Johnson beginning in 1952. During the same year Renslow, already established as a professional photographer, entered the physique photography business.

Renslow’s first part-time entrepreneurial ventures were in photography. His first photography business commenced in 1948, the year after he graduated from high school, when he opened Century Studio. Century Studio was a mail-order business that offered female nudes. From June 1950 to c. 1952 Renslow and a partner operated Renslow Studios, a portrait photography studio (Rinella 1996). In 1952 a local physique photographer named Harry Mickelson, a contributor to *Tomorrow’s Man*, enlisted Renslow as a partner in a new physique studio.³⁰⁷

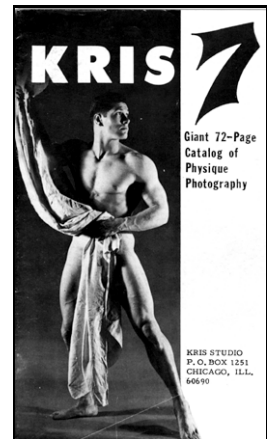


Figure 148: Kris annual catalog. c. 1962 (LA&M)

³⁰⁷ Rinella 1996; Hooven 1995, p. 108. A variety of dates are given in published accounts and oral histories for the founding of Kris Studio. Jack Rinella’s 1952 date is the most plausible and consistent with other known dates in Renslow’s life. In general, the Rinella timeline is the most authoritative currently available for Chicago.

They called the new business Kris Studio (hereafter Kris).³⁰⁸ Kris was destined to become one of the leading producers of homoerotic beefcake images and, during the late 1960's, the key producer of Gay Leather images in the physique genre. The initial partnership of Mickelson-Renslow was short-lived: in 1954 Mickelson, concerned about potentially damaging publicity surrounding the clearly gay-oriented business, sold Renslow his interest in the business.³⁰⁹

In 1953 Renslow met and immediately fell in love with Dom Orejudos (1933-1991), at that time a young artist and dancer recently graduated from high school.³¹⁰ Orejudos soon replaced Mickelson as Renslow's partner in Kris Studio, and the two became lifetime companions. Working full time at Kris, Orejudos produced original artwork and worked as the studio's art director. In addition to routine office work, Orejudos posed models and supervised photo sessions, and was largely responsible for the content of Kris products. Renslow worked as photographer and managed the business. Renslow had been working part-time at Kris, but in 1955 he quit a full-time job as a regional supervisor at Walgreens to devote his full energies to the studio. The partnership was extremely successful: Kris became a

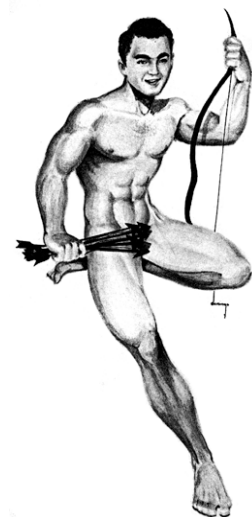


Figure 149: Art by "Domingo." Dom Orejudos' first published work. *Tomorrow's Man*, v. 1, no. 8, September 1953 (LA&M)

³⁰⁸ The term "Kris" refers to a type of knife.

³⁰⁹ George interview with Renslow (n.d., LA&M).

³¹⁰ Contradictory accounts in oral histories complicate dating of events in the life of Renslow and Orejudos. Orejudos was first photographed by Kris Studio on August 8, 1953 (Rinella 1996). In an interview with George Busse (n.d.; LA&M), Orejudos recalled that he had produced work for *Tomorrow's Man* prior to meeting Renslow. Orejudos' first published work in *Tomorrow's Man* was in September 1953. These events place their first meeting during the summer of 1953.

leading producer of physique photography and a lucrative business for the partners. Proceeds from Kris allowed the partners to purchase Irv Johnson's Chicago gym in 1958. The gym, renamed Triumph Gym by Renslow and Orejudos, sustained itself as an additional independent business and became a key source of models for the photography studio.

Kris's initial products were photographs, which were sold in sets and advertised primarily in physique magazines such as *Physique Pictorial*, *Tomorrow's Man*, and the Weider publications—which accepted advertisements for “beautiful men in poses” but nothing that “got too kinky.”³¹¹ Kris operated exclusively through mail order, using only first-class postage and very discrete packaging that provided no indication of content. This was unlike contemporary mail order merchants such as Irving Klaw, who used second-class mail and thus opened himself to inspections and harassment by the U.S. Post Office. Kris issued its own ephemera in the form of numbered annual catalogs and flyers, and sold its products to a nationwide clientele. Renslow recalls that most Kris customers were from small towns “where people couldn't reach other gay people” (ibid.).

Through the early 1960's the content and style of Kris products were consistent with those of contemporary physique producers, including Bob Mizer.³¹² As with other physique

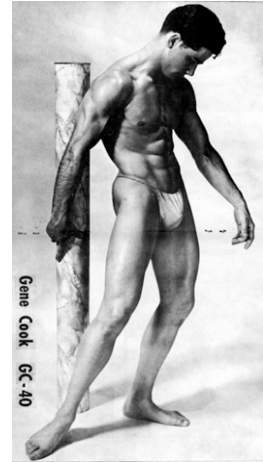


Figure 150: Classic physique—from Kris catalog #3, c. 1958 (LA&M)

³¹¹ Bienvenu interview with Renslow (b), August 30, 1996.

³¹² Renslow and Orejudos made at least one trip to Los Angeles to do photography shoots with Mizer. For a period of time when Mizer was experiencing legal difficulties (c. 1967),

studios homoeroticism in Kris products was mediated through a limited number of culturally and legally permissible “alibis” (cf. Waugh 1996, p. 219)—such as art, sport, and nature. Kris “alibis” were primarily art and sport. In the early to mid-1950’s, key Kris themes in photography and artwork included the classical nude, cowboy, gladiator, wrestler, and the military. Kris ephemera framed the studio’s products as source material for artists. For example:

Our aim is to offer poses with a primarily aesthetic motivation. Consequently our models have not been chosen for huge bulging muscles, but for certain indefinable qualities which we felt would be best suited to the needs of the many artists and sculptors who use these photos as reference.

The “indefinable qualities” emphasized masculine sexuality and, increasingly through the 1950’s, very subtle allusions to dominant and submissive sexuality. Masculine gay sexuality was the central motif.

In the early 1960’s Kris began to differentiate its products more firmly by including leather and SM representations. A review of dated Kris model releases, today held at LA&M, allows a timeline for Kris leather representations to be established. “Pre-leather” photographs with subtle allusions to dominant and submissive sexuality—i.e. with props such as chains and ropes—appeared circa 1958. One of the earliest and most popular models appearing in explicitly sadomasochistic Kris photos in the early Gay Leather style was known by the pseudonym



Figure 151: "Johnny Savage" Kris Studio, c. 1960 (LA&M)

Kris received Mizer’s mail in Chicago and forwarded it (Bienvenu interview with Renslow (b), August 30, 1996; DeBlase 1996.

"Johnny Savage." He was first photographed on November 25, 1960. Other noteworthy Kris models with explicit SM-leather portfolios were photographed in the early 1960's. Renslow, then at the cutting edge of Gay Leather erotica, recalled the props used in leather photographs in the 1960's (Bienvenu interview with Renslow (b), August 30, 1996):

... motorcycle caps, boots, leather posing straps, whips, a person being tied up, bondage, or just decked with chains. That was almost all the symbolism used. And of course the motorcycle itself. We did bring my bike in at the time. We photographed a lot of things using the bike itself.

The shift toward Gay Leather content in Kris products is not at all surprising: Kris studio was owned by the same partners who simultaneously operated the world's preeminent leather bar, and who were themselves early practitioners of the leather lifestyle. What is surprising is the relatively late date at which this transition occurred. Explicit Kris leather-SM representations commenced at least five years *after* Renslow and Orejudos adopted the leather style in their personal lives, and three years after a semi-organized gay leather group began to meet in local bars.

The most likely reason for the delay is the novelty of leather as a representational theme in erotica. The new Gay Leather style entailed a break from the established repertoire of motifs found in the physique genre, and even in the case of Renslow and Orejudos elements of the new style were incorporated into their work gradually. During the 1960's, however, Kris produced (and sold) Gay Leather materials in earnest. While maintaining a product line that was primarily



Figure 152: "Johnny Savage" Kris Studio, c. 1960 (LA&M)

composed of conventional beefcake, which had broader appeal and thus was more economically sound, Kris established itself as the preeminent producer of Gay Leather erotica.

Further developing its niche in the market, in 1963 Kris began to produce a digest-size periodical, *Mars* magazine. *Mars* was produced by Renslow and Orejudos, but published and distributed by Lynn Womack, owner of Allied Distributors of Washington, D.C.. Womack's company published *MANual* magazine, the homoerotic periodical at the center of the *Manual v. Day* Supreme Court decision discussed above, and other magazines such as *Grecian Guild Pictorial*. The 1962 decision vindicating *MANual* (and, implicitly, homoerotic images) was a watershed in the development of gay erotica in general. As noted by Waugh in his analysis of the historical development of gay erotica, *Manual v. Day* opened the door for a new generation of increasingly explicit and diversified gay publications. *Mars*, replete with leather-SM images, was among the first of these new publications (Waugh 1996, p. 251).³¹³ It can comfortably be considered the first Gay Leather magazine.

Like producers in the American Fetish style, Kris experienced harassment and trouble from law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Post Office. Despite careful attention

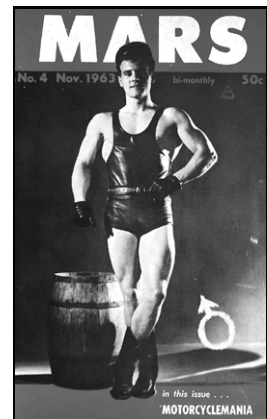


Figure 153: Kris Studio: *Mars* magazine, special issues on "Motorcyclemania,"—Cover photo by Scott Studio in England., Nov. 1963 (LA&M)

³¹³ Womack, described by Renslow as a nearly blind "two hundred and fifty pound albino" (Rinella interview with Renslow, June 6, 1995; LA&M), was noted for his shady business practices. Renslow recalled that although Womack made a profit from the publication and distribution of the magazine, Kris "never made a penny" from *Mars* (ibid.). Womack's Allied Distributors published a number of gay-oriented magazines, including *Grecian Guild Pictorial*.

to the boundaries of current obscenity law, Renslow was arrested in 1958 and again in 1966 on charges of obscenity. In both cases he defeated the charges, on one occasion offering a photograph of a nude male statue located at the trial courthouse as evidence that the nude body is not obscene.

The experience of Kris indicates different standards applied to heterosexually oriented and gay erotica. Although Kris produced an abundance of material with fetishistic and “sadistic” content, the studio’s legal troubles centered on the homoerotic content of their products. Law enforcement agencies interacting with Kris Studio were anxious to suppress features such as “excessive strap delineation” in photos—i.e., genitals protruding through covering cloths. In the case of images produced by Kris, it seems that fetishistic or SM representations were not a special category of concern to law enforcement officials. This is in sharp contrast to heterosexually-oriented producers such as Burtman and Klaw.

Postal Inspectors did occasionally complain about Kris imagery that they interpreted as sadomasochistic.³¹⁴ However, Renslow remembers no instance where Kris had a serious “issue” with law enforcement officials because of fetishistic or SM images. Renslow’s impression was that law enforcement officials were extremely unsophisticated about the subtle symbolism of



Figure 154: “The pitchfork makes this too sadistic! Honestly this is what he said.” Postal Inspector’s interpretation of Kris photograph, 1961 (KIRSGR)

³¹⁴ See Orejudos letter to Pomeroy, June 30, 1961, KIRSGR vertical file: *Censorship Cases, Post Office*. The letter includes several photos with captions attached indicating negative comments of Postal Inspectors made during a conference. Most are patently absurd; for an example, see Figure 154.

SM, and either did not recognize or misinterpreted images with SM allusions.³¹⁵

Kris closed circa 1973. As an indication of the scale of its operation at that time, Kris transferred to its successor, Target Studio in New York City, a direct-mail client list of approximately 6,000 names.

³¹⁵ Bienvenu interview with Renslow (b), August 30, 1996.

5.4 San Francisco: early organizational developments

San Francisco was the fourth major city to develop an organized gay leather subculture, following Chicago by approximately three years. Although a relative latecomer, the subcultural infrastructure supporting the Gay Leather style was destined to develop most fully in San Francisco. However, most of this development occurred after the period covered in this analysis and is not discussed here. By the time San Francisco's early leather subculture began to develop organizationally, the core features of the Gay Leather style that are the focus of this dissertation—the motorcycle motif, an overtly masculine gay aesthetic—were well established.³¹⁶ My presentation here will thus be brief.³¹⁷

San Francisco had no “dedicated” leather bars or organizations during the 1950's. Beginning circa 1954, individuals wearing leather would congregate in mixed gay bars, primarily in the old Embarcadero and Tenderloin sections of the city (Rubin 1994, p. 148). An example is Jacks on the Waterfront, a bar that was not a leather bar but was frequented by early leathermen and proto-leathermen—i.e., men who would later adopt the leather style as San Francisco's organized leather subculture developed (ibid., p. 151-152). Key themes at Jack's on the Waterfront were “leather, cowboy boots, macho image” (ibid., p. 152).

³¹⁶ This is not to suggest that San Francisco was not a significant site of stylistic development within leather subcultures—quite the contrary. San Francisco has been the home of many artists, writers, publishers, and craftspersons who contributed to the further development of “leather,” and a key site of subculture-specific organizational differentiation and specialization. However, this wide, post-modern diversification occurred, for the most part, after 1971 and involved elaboration and modifications of the basic style that is my focus in this dissertation.

³¹⁷ I refer readers interested in a detailed historical account of San Francisco's leather subculture to Rubin's 1994 dissertation. Rubin's focus is the development of San Francisco's leather subculture between 1960 and 1990.

The first dedicated leather bar in San Francisco was the short-lived Why Not, which opened in 1961.³¹⁸ The owners of the Why Not decided to transform the bar, initially “an ordinary gay bar,” into a leather bar in order to attract the then dispersed leather crowd (Rubin 1994, p. 148). They hired a leatherman, Tony Tavarossi, to manage the bar—which was successful for a short period before it was closed following a vice squad arrest and subsequent hearing by the Alcoholic Beverage Commission (ibid., p. 148).

The second major leather bar in San Francisco was the Tool Box, which was likely the first gay leather bar in any location to receive wide mass media attention. The Tool Box also opened in 1961, but remained in operation until 1971 (DeBlase 1996, p. 12). Rubin writes that “The Tool Box was the most renowned of the early San Francisco leather bars, and was the first to be South of Market”—an area that developed during the 1960’s as the center of the gay leather subculture in the city (Rubin 1994, p. 158). One of the most prominent features of the Tool Box was a wall-size mural of butch men in leather, designed by one of the most prominent gay leather artists in San Francisco: Chuck Arnette. In the June 26, 1964 issue of *Life*, the magazine published an article “Homosexuality in America” that featured a two-page photograph of the Tool Box. The photo is of a group of leathermen in the bar, with Arnett’s mural prominent in the background.³¹⁹ This article widely publicized the existence of a gay leather subculture in San Francisco, and contributed to the reputation of the city as a mecca for gay men. DeBlase and Rubin note the claim that this

³¹⁸ In her dissertation (p. 148) Rubin dates the opening of the Why Not in 1960; later information shifted this date to 1961 (Gayle Rubin personal communication, 29 April 1997).

³¹⁹ DeBlase 1996, p. 13; Rubin 1994, p. 159-164. Arnette’s work is found throughout the South of Market area of San Francisco. Rubin points out that many men pictured in this mural became prominent figures in the local leather community (Rubin 1994, p. 160-162).

article helped to spark gay migration to San Francisco (DeBlase 1996, p. 13, Rubin 1994, p. 164). Rubin observed that “aside from *The Wild One*, the issue of *Life* with the picture of the Tool Box was the piece of popular culture most often mentioned by the men with whom I’ve spoken” (ibid.).

Febe’s, which opened in 1966 and operated until 1986, was the third major leather bar in San Francisco. Febe’s was in the first generation of leather establishments to open on Folsom Street, which became the main street of San Francisco leather (affectionately called “the miracle mile”) (Rubin 1994, p. 169). Illustrating the differentiation of the early leather community, Febe’s became the chief bar for the gay motorcycle club crowd, while the Ramrod, a bar that opened down the street from Febe’s in 1968, became a home bar for the leather SM crowd (Rubin 1994, p. 176). Febe’s was also the site of A Taste of Leather, one of the first leather shops in San Francisco and the very first in the South of Market area.

As in Los Angeles, the motorcycle club developed contemporaneously with the leather bar system in San Francisco, although several years later (and several years before comparable organizations formed on the East Coast and Midwest). The first gay MC in the San Francisco area was the Warlocks, formed in 1960, followed by the California Motor Club (CMC). Like MC’s in other locations, these organizations sponsored “runs” and other activities, and provided a home for butch gay men.

As in other locations during the 1960’s, in San Francisco it was primarily in the organizational context of motorcycle clubs and leather bars that the Gay Leather style was given a social-organizational foundation. The basic characteristics of these organizations are very similar to those described in previous sections in this chapter. These seminal organizations were later supplemented by a variety of additional organizations—including clubs,

bathhouses, publishers, and other businesses—that played a role in further development of the style. However, these were later developments that largely did not exist through the mid-1960's.

5.5: Appropriation of American Fetish and Gay Leather Styles in Popular Culture: 1960-1971

Well, back then basically people who were into bike, the S&M, and bondage and stuff were into leather. Now, you never know because it's such a fashion thing. But basically back then, if you saw someone in leather, you knew basically they were into something. Now it doesn't mean anything like it did then. To some people it does, but there are so many people who will, you know, put on jacket and go running up and down the street, which you can see on Halsted. But back then, people were serious about it.

Rinella interview with Bob M., 14 July 1995 (LA&M)

For the past *thirty years*, the “playful” use of fetishistic themes has been increasingly assimilated into fashion. Whatever the ebb and flow of seasonal collections, fashion has repeatedly and increasingly emphasized fetishistic styles. Fetishism is especially significant at this time in history because it is no longer associated primarily with individual sexual “perversions” or sexual subcultures. Hitherto secret practices have become increasingly visible throughout popular culture. Prior to about 1965, fetishistic imagery was mostly hidden away in sex magazines like *High Heels*, and fetish fashions were hard to obtain. But then the objects and images associated with fetishism began to come out of the closet.

Steele, *Fetish* (1996), p. 33 (italics in original)

The transition of American Fetish and Gay Leather style from the realm of the “serious” subcultural practitioner to the “playful” realm of popular culture involved three broad structural changes, all of which took shape during the 1960's. These structural changes were:

- *Changes in the legal environment* that removed restrictions on fetishistic images and materials. This has been extensively documented in the preceding analysis. As discussed above (p. 79), fetishistic fashion began

to appear in American cheesecake magazines as early as the 1940's. These initial popular culture expressions of the American Fetish style were specifically targeted by agencies of social control, ranging from religious anti-obscenity organizations to law enforcement agencies. It was not until the 1960's that fetishistic images and costume ceased to provoke police interest. During this period fetishistic fashions began to emerge as a significant theme in mass produced clothing and popular culture products.

- *Changes in technology* that made leather and fetish clothing more commercially viable commodities. As noted above, prior to the early 1960's fetishistic clothing was made of materials that were expensive and required the services of specialized artisans (who were not easy to find). A number of technologies incorporated into clothing manufacturing during the late 1950's and 1960's lowered the cost and broadened the physical characteristics of materials used in fetishistic clothing. These include "fashion" leather and polymer-based synthetics such as polyvinylchloride (PVC).



New age of leather

Adorable look for the small, smart spender—an over-the-head wraparound skimmer in bright tomato-red leather, lined in red-and-yellow printed calico, worn over its own matching calico bloomers. Sizes 1-6x. Most colours. \$25. Designed by Witman-Reals for the Boutique at Enrico Caruso, 110 East 55th St., N.Y. 22.

Figure 155: Fashion leather, an unproblematic commodity suitable for children's clothing by 1965 (*Vogue*, July 1965)

- *Changes in fashion* that placed greater emphasis on radical fashion. These changes in fashion trends, and the technological innovations underlying them, are the focus of this section. Beginning in the 1960's, leading stylists from major design houses began self-consciously to mine subcultural contexts for ideas. In the fashion literature, this transition is referred to as the appropriation of "Left-Bank," or youth culture into fashion design. Explicit appropriation of subcultural motifs in haute couture commenced in 1960, and accelerated during the mid and late 1960's. These innovative appropriations, initially lambasted by critics, were gradually introduced into everyday fashion by mass media publications such as *Vogue*, and clothing manufacturers, who were able to produce fetishistic clothing economically by using new materials.

In the following discussion I briefly sketch representative key designers and technological innovations that contributed to the appropriation of fetishistic themes in popular culture.

5.51 Appropriations of fetishistic subcultural motifs in haute couture design and mainstream fashion in the 1960's

The vanguard in fashion through the 1950's were haute couture designers in Paris, such as Christian Dior. During this period, characterized as "a time of tyrannical dictatorship from Paris" (Howell 1975, p. 204), leather was primarily used for shoes, coats and accessories such as gloves and belts. Fetishistic



Figure 156: In a few short years between 1960 and 1965, subcultural leather style was established as cool youth fashion (*Vogue*, December 15, 1965)

fashions were not a component of clothing lines from major designers and haute couture studios.

The first explicit appropriation of fetishistic, subcultural themes by a major stylist occurred in 1960, when Yves Saint Laurent, then chief designer for Dior in Paris, highlighted a motif of black, leather-clad, youth-culture in his 1960 fall show (Martin 1995, p. 460; Steele 1996, p. 157). His “Left Bank,” “Beat” look line was self-consciously avant-garde, and “included black leather suits and coats, knitted caps, high turtleneck collars, and biker-style jackets in mink and crocodile skin” (Mulvagh, p. 262). As one contemporary account described the line: “The beat look is the news at Dior...pale zombie faces, leather suits and coats; knitted caps and high turtleneck collars, black endlessly” (Howell 1975, p. 273).

Saint Laurent’s 1960 Dior show represented a radical departure from traditional haute couture design, and evoked severe criticism in the press. The strong negative reaction contributed to Saint Laurent being replaced at Dior, during a personally disastrous period when he was briefly drafted into the French army (Rawsthorn 1996, p. 46-52). In 1961, Saint-Laurent co-founded an independent design studio in Paris, where he continued to appropriate subcultural, fetishistic motifs in mainstream fashion (Martin 1995, p. 460; Mulvagh, p. 243). His independent 1963 show contained even more explicit use of subcultural, fetishistic themes, a trend that continued with Saint Laurent and other designers as clothing design in the 1960’s became more experimental and radical.

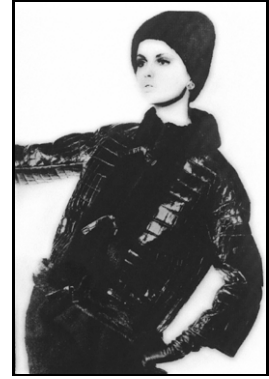


Figure 157: Alligator black leather, from Saint Laurent's scandalous 1960 "Left Bank" show for Dior (PC)



Figure 158: Black, thigh-high alligator boots, leather coat. Saint Laurent's independent, more explicitly fetishistic "Left Bank" look, 1963. (PC)

In 1964, designers Courrèges and Cardin introduced “space-age” fashions, featuring shiny white, calf-high PVC boots (Ewing [1974] 1992, p. 186) and leather stocking boots (Carter 1977, p. 45). Courrèges also introduced a shorter skirt, paired with calf-high boots with low heels. The mini-skirt, emphasized in Courrèges’ line and firmly established in the United States by 1966, was instrumental in the return of the boot to fashion (Probert 1981, p. 62-63):

The return of the long boot was assured after Courrèges’ crop of shiny white boots in his spring 1964 collection; for more than a decade after this event, boots were hot fashion news. Sports aside, boots had not been in fashion for fifty years (but had for many years been the characteristic garb of prostitutes in some cities).³²⁰ As the sixties progressed fashion boots became tighter to the leg. At first they were made of plain leather or plastic, but later versions used treated leathers, textiles, appliquéd leathers. Perhaps the most popular was the ‘wet look’ boot, extremely shiny and soft (unlike patent). The process was used on fabric and leather to produce a fitting and comfortable high boot.



Figure 159: The white Courrèges look of 1964 (PC)

Another important designer who employed leather in mainstream fashion is Anne Klein, who during the mid-1960’s worked as a consultant for Mallory leathers. Klein took full advantage of available technologies in fashion leather to extend uses of leather in clothing. She treated leather like any other fabric, and “established leather as a reputable dress fabric in the ready-to-wear market. She designed leather separates in bright colors and smartly styled silhouettes” (Martin 1995, p. 283). Klein herself noted, “There are so many textures and colors

³²⁰ This was also noted by Paul Gebhard ([1969] 1976, p. 160); see page 8 above.

available, from suede to buckskin, there aren't any limitations for the designer any more" (Morris 1966, p. 39).

Many other examples of specific designers could be cited (cf. Steele 1996), but in each case the 1960's period of radical experimentation in fashion design, as well as the expanded use of leather, was facilitated by developments in materials and manufacturing technology. One key shift was toward the use of synthetic materials, such as PVC, in novel designs. A second was the wide use of "fashion" leather. Fashion leather employed twentieth century manufacturing technologies to create leather that was more versatile in use and more economical to produce than with traditional methods. In its various forms, fashion leather products became relatively cheap, soft, more durable, washable, and capable of mass production in a wide range of colors. In terms of possible uses, during the 1960's leather became much like any conventional fabric.

Many of the technological developments incorporated into fetishistic fashion during the 1960's were being addressed in laboratory settings during the 1950's. This is reflected in industry technical publications such as *Journal of the Society of Leather Trades' Chemists*. Industrial chemists in the late-1950's and early 1960's were working through technical problems such as how to ensure stable and predictable coloring of leather in manufacturing runs, and how to create enhanced leathers with physical characteristics that were not only better suited to diverse clothing applications than traditional leathers, but could also economically compete with a broad range of synthetic



Figure 160: Leather as an everyday fabric: black leather shirt highlighted in *Vogue* magazine, c. 1962 (PC)

materials then emerging in the clothing industry. For example, technologies for applying polyurethane finishes to leather were an active area of investigation by industry scientists in the early 1960's. These finishes offered characteristics such as "a very bright, deep gloss," "outstanding wear and abrasion resistance," and "excellent water resistance" (Jarrett 1963, p. 189). A second example of a new technology developed during the 1950's and marketed during the 1960's is Procion dyes for leather. Procion dyestuffs, first developed in 1956, were the first colored dyes to "actually combine with the fibre and thus become an integral part of the leather" (Mullen 1962, p. 162). Previous leather dyes worked through "physical absorption or mechanical retention" (ibid.). These new dyes allowed a wide spectrum of color shades and were washable. Such technological innovations provided new product possibilities for designers and manufacturers of leather clothing.

Polymer technologies (new and old) were also directly employed in radical fashion of the 1960's. An example is DuPont Corfam, a plastic leather substitute used in shoes and, during the 1960's, fetishistic boots. Polyvinylchloride (PVC) is a water-impermeable plastic with a wide variety of uses, ranging from pipes to plasma bags. In clothing manufacturing PVC was initially used for utilitarian products such as rain gear. During the 1960's designers began to use PVC as a material for fashion boots, jackets, pants, and skirts. PVC is lighter and more comfortable than traditional materials with comparable physical characteristics, such as rubber. PVC can also be directly



Figure 161: Technologically cutting-edge materials: the 1964 Courrèges look in blue. Blue fashion leather outfit and "shiny" kid boots (PC)

substituted for materials traditionally made of leather, such as those found in shoes and boots. PVC could be injection-molded “directly on to the shoe, avoiding the need to cut, attach and finish the sole as separate operations” (Baynes 1968). This made for more efficient and less expensive manufacture of shoes. Particular applications of PVC technology were influenced by fashion trends (Baynes 1968):

Fashion has its effect on the ebb and flow of demand. With the current renaissance of fashion interest in the high boot, p.v.c. material have been used extensively for the leg portions of these because of their cheapness and the ease with which they can be machine-cut from material in roll form.

As noted by cultural historian Valerie Steele, PVC is especially well suited for appropriation as a “shiny” hard-media fetish material (Steele 1996, p. 152-153):³²¹

The invention of PVC was especially important because it made the “wet look” possible, adding a new twist to the old enthusiasm for raincoats. As early as 1960, fashion designer Mary Quant did a wet-look collection.

“Wet look” materials were ubiquitous in popular culture media and fetishistic fashions by the late 1960’s.



Figure 162: A “Jantzen underworld fashion,” accentuated with a “wet look,” biker-inspired jacket. This fetishy lingerie advertisement could easily have provoked police interest a decade earlier. *Vogue*, March 15, 1966.

³²¹ PVC, composed of 43% petroleum and 57% rock salt, is a venerable polymer that was actually “invented” during the nineteenth century. The first patents for PVC production were filed in the United States in 1912. Plant manufacturing of PVC products began in Germany and the United States in the early 1930’s (Source: “The PVC Centre” web site: www.ramsay.co.uk).

5.52 Early appropriation of fetishistic subcultural motifs in television: The Avengers

A final popular culture medium to be addressed is television. The earliest and still most noteworthy example of the appropriation of explicitly fetishistic, subcultural costume in television is the British television series "The Avengers." The Avengers first appeared on British television in January 1961. The show was a techno-spy action series that revolved around the adventures of a team of two British secret agents: an older, male, upper-crust, agent; and a younger, physically aggressive (a martial arts expert), female assistant. The tongue-in-cheek, James Bond-like series was very successful in Britain. In 1964 The Avengers was purchased by ABC for use in the fall 1965 season in the United States (Luckett 1997, p. 134).

Through its history from 1961 to 1969, the show featured several female costars. The female lead was usually dressed in leather catsuits or pantsuits, or "way-out leather ensembles, harem bras and panties, Toreador outfits with bare midriffs, and indescribably modern outfits, half spaceman, half country girl" (Price 1966). The first was Honor Blackman, "who was tough, sexy and nearly always in black leather" (Price 1966). Blackman left the show after the 1964 season, and later played Pussy Galore in the James Bond film "Goldfinger." When the show was first broadcast in the United States on March 28, 1966, Dianna Rigg had taken over the sexy assistant role as Emma Peel, similarly dressed in leather. The overtly fetishistic composition was by



Figure 163: Prime-time kinkiness: a scene from "The Avengers," c. 1966 (PC)



Figure 164: A fight scene from "The Avengers" (PC)

design. An associate producer of the series noted, “We’re constantly kinky. If there’s a choice between Emma Peel fighting in a wet dress or a dry one, we choose wet.”³²²

The Avengers pushed the boundaries of acceptable kinky representations in mass media products, and, as noted by numerous commentators (e.g., Möser 1993; North 1970, p. 67-68; Steele 1996, p. 34-35), played an important role in popularizing previously subcultural, fetishistic style.



Figure 165: Actress Diana Rigg (“Emma Peel”) in a leather catsuit, 1966 (PC)

³²² “Good-Chap Sexuality,” *Newsweek*, April 4, 1966, p. 96.

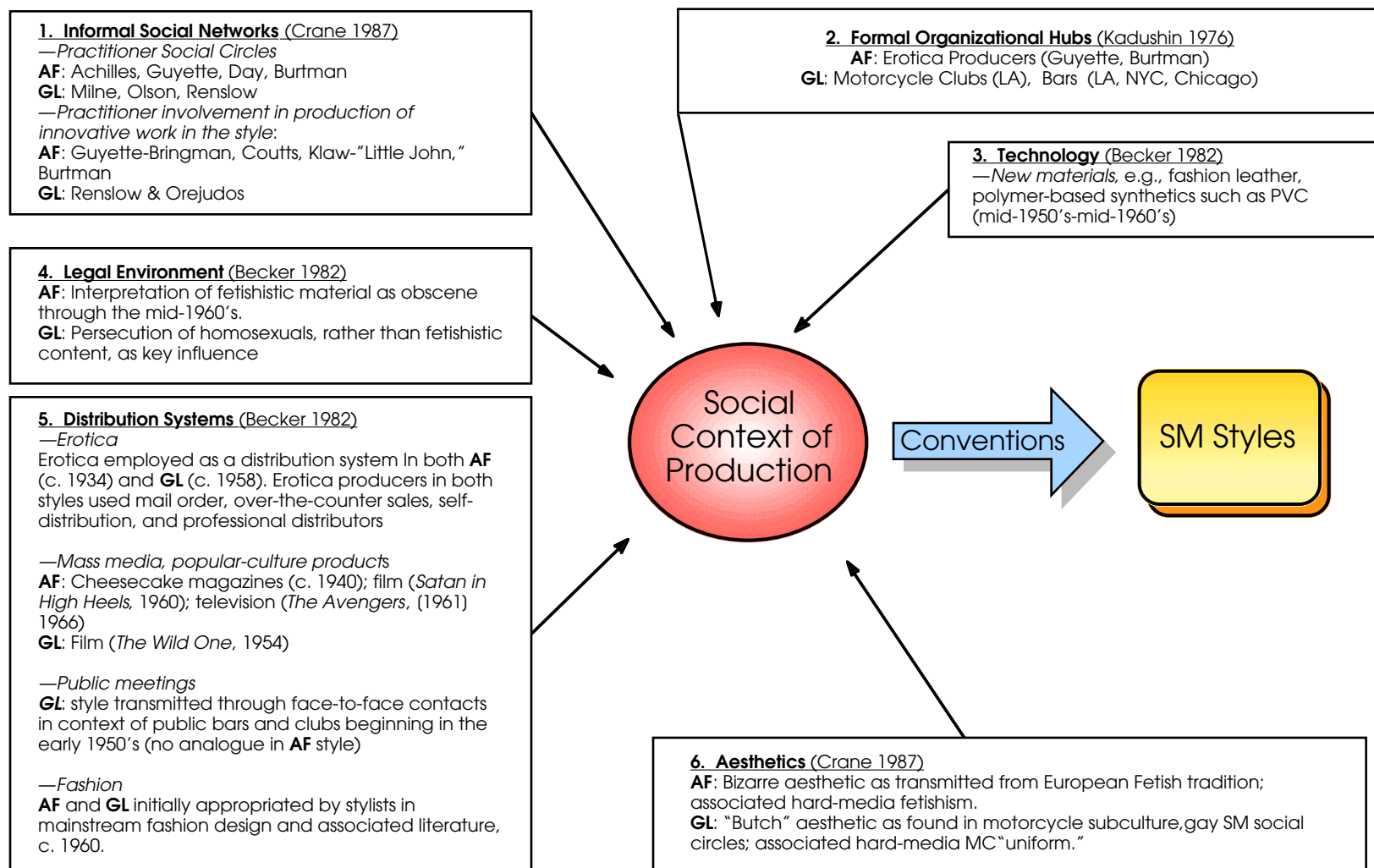


Figure 166: Elaborated model of key influences on development of American Fetish (AF) and Gay Leather (GL) styles. Citations are to key sources of analytic categories; as discussed above (p. 25), the basic model is derived from Rosenblum (1978).

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Many recent studies of sexuality have emphasized the historically constructed nature of modern sexual categories, including homosexuality (e.g., Weeks 1977), heterosexuality (Katz 1995), and various particular predilections that are grouped under the modern label “paraphilias” (e.g., Nye 1993). Modern sadomasochism is also an historically contingent, socially constructed sexual category—albeit one that has received virtually no attention in the literature when compared with categories such as homosexuality. Certainly, the core cultural attributes associated with modern SM are historically contingent. There is no “natural” affinity between, for example, fetishized hard media materials and dominant and submissive sexuality. One can easily imagine these associations not existing today and, in fact, prior to the twentieth century they did not exist. These associations have been forged through particular historical lines of development, in which distinctive expressive styles have been formed in the context of subcultural groups.

In this dissertation I have charted the background and development of two distinct SM styles that developed in the twentieth-century United States: American Fetish and Gay Leather. I have also indicated a timeline and key sites where these subcultural styles were introduced into popular culture. The production of culture approach employed in this analysis provides an appropriate framework for conceptualizing and analyzing this process. Drawing from this literature (e.g., Becker 1982; Crane 1987; Kadushin 1976; Peterson 1976, 1979; Rosenblum 1978), this dissertation has followed the historical development of modern SM style along the analytic dimensions of

formal organizations, informal social networks, the legal environment, distribution systems, aesthetic precedents, and technology. These are represented as inputs in the model on page 273 above, which is based on Rosenblum's (1978) model of the production of style in photography (cf. p. 25 above). Differences along these dimensions affected the social context of production in which the conventions of SM styles have been created, and contributed to variation in the conventions, and thus content, of the styles. In this conclusion I first provide a brief summary of key findings of the preceding historical analysis, organized by the inputs represented in the model above (numbered input "boxes" are indicated in brackets below). I then note some theoretical implications of this study that will be of interest to sociologists of culture and sexuality.

Key Findings of the study

Aesthetics, Periodization of SM styles [box 6]. Historical SM styles have not been clearly defined and periodicized in the current literature. Drawing from historical materials and more recent ethnographic accounts, in chapter one I defined key attributes of four distinct SM styles since the nineteenth century (see the summary table on page 20). Elements of fetishistic style associated with sadomasochism common today first emerged in heterosexual practitioner networks and erotica during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As elaborated in chapter one (cf. p. 7 above), modern SM style is quite different from its immediate nineteenth century antecedent on at least two criteria: (1) fetishistic composition; and (2) sexual practices and aesthetics. To briefly recall the distinction: in composition, nineteenth century "SM" representations tended to emphasize *soft media* materials, such as fur and satin. In contrast, twentieth-century representations and literature, particularly since the late

1920's, have emphasized a variety of *hard media* fetishistic objects and materials, such as leather and rubber. The latter association is a central feature of SM style today, in both subcultural contexts and in popular culture.

In sexual practices and aesthetics, nineteenth century "SM" representations and literature emphasized flagellation, in its classical literary form a rigidly ritualized and narrow practice (Gibson 1978). In contrast, early twentieth century SM representations engage a much broader range of activities and, very importantly, articulate an aesthetic of *bizarre*. The bizarre aesthetic, which developed in the context of heterosexual social networks and erotica during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasizes the pursuit of pleasure in the context of creative exploration of diverse sexual practices and fetishistic costume. The associated term "bizarre" was widely used among practitioners in the early and mid-twentieth century, and continues to be used today.

The later "butch" aesthetic of the Gay Leather style, which shares an association with unconventional sexual practices and hard media costume, emphasizes masculine homosexuality and emerged in part as a subculturally constructed alternative to effeminate gay stereotypes.

As discussed above, the seminal European Fetish style became predominant in Germany, France, and Britain in the late 1920's. Based on a direct contact with European Fetish producers in the early 1930's, production in the American Fetish style commenced in New York City circa 1934. A distinctive Gay Leather style dates from circa 1954 in southern California.

Sites of stylistic innovation: informal social networks linked to formal organizations [box 1, 2]. Three closely related issues fall under this rubric: first, the role of formal organizations in facilitating the development of

subcultural practitioner networks; second, the role of practitioners in the creation of stylistically innovative material; and third, the effect of formal organizational setting on the characteristics of each style.

Formal Organizations. In her analysis of the development of avant-garde styles in mid-twentieth century New York City, Crane highlights the importance of formal organizations—in her analysis these were art galleries—around which informal social circles of artists formed. Innovations in avant-garde styles occurred in the context of these organizationally-grounded informal social circles, a structure theoretically elaborated by Kadushin (1976). A very similar process occurred in the cases of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles, although the organizational foundations in each case were quite different.

In the case of the American Fetish style, erotica producers provided a formal organizational foundation that served as a hub around which early practitioner social circles formed. This was largely due to the public nature of these commercial enterprises, which attracted the attention of dispersed individuals who were interested in various materials produced. The businesses of Guyette, Coutts and Burtman served as centers around which practitioner social circles and networks formed.³²³ Through referrals, “correspondence clubs,” and face-to-face networking, these commercially centered circles facilitated contacts among a cadre of serious private practitioners, and overlapped with and contributed to the development of non-commercial, private circles such as that of Greg Day.³²⁴

³²³ A similar role was played by businesses in the antecedent European Fetish style, such as MacNaught’s shoe store in Sydney and other businesses that advertised in *London Life* magazine.

³²⁴ As discussed above (p. 98), Day was a wealthy patron of the bizarre who was an early Guyette associate, and later a close friend of John Coutts.

The social organizational foundation of the Gay Leather style was structurally similar, but quite different in its details. Initially in California, formal organizations around which practitioner networks formed were motorcycle clubs and bars. Configured differently than the California case, Gay Leather social networks in New York City and Chicago were initially centered on resourceful practitioners such as Bob Milne, but remained extremely limited in size until linked to bars as a public, formal organizational base circa 1954. It was in the context of these organizations and associated social networks that the initial appropriation of the biker leather motif occurred, as well as subsequent elaboration in conventions of the Gay Leather style.

In sharp contrast to the American Fetish style, erotica and erotica producers played an ancillary role in the development of the Gay Leather style. Chuck Renslow and Dom Orejudos, who were both erotica producers and early leathermen, provide a good illustration of the priority. As detailed above, both were central figures in Chicago's early leather and SM subcultures, and had themselves adopted the MC leather "uniform" by the mid-1950's. By that time they were well-versed in the symbols and accoutrements of the early Gay Leather style. However, explicit motorcycle leather, both with and without SM allusions, did not appear in Kris Studio photographs until the late 1950's. Leather was not a common theme in Kris products until the early 1960's. This pattern is generalizable throughout the genre.

Practitioner involvement in stylistic innovations. Without exception, producers in the early American Fetish style employed practitioners in the creation of stylistically innovative materials—i.e. materials that established or elaborated conventions of the style. In some cases (e.g., Coutts) these producers were themselves artist-practitioners. In others (e.g., Klaw), non-

practitioner commercial producers facilitated the production of material by practitioners who worked as employees or patrons. In both cases, it is important to note the central role played by practitioner social circles and practitioner-producer collaborations in innovative work in the American Fetish style through the 1960's. Specific examples discussed in the preceding analysis include the 1930's collaboration between erotica producer Charles Guyette and practitioner John Bringman, as well as the 1940's collaboration between Irving Klaw and bondage aficionado "Little John."

In the case of the Gay Leather style, subcultural standardization and elaboration of the basic hard media motorcycle costume occurred in the context of practitioner social networks and organizations. As in the American Fetish case, producers of gay erotica who created innovative Gay Leather representations either employed artist-practitioners attuned to the symbols and meanings of the new style, or were themselves gay leather practitioners—as in the cases of Bob Mizer and Renslow and Orejudos, respectively.

It is important to note the separation of social networks underlying the early American Fetish and Gay Leather styles. Specifically, there is no evidence that heterosexual erotica served as a precedent or influence for early representations in the Gay Leather style, or that American Fetish and Gay Leather social networks overlapped. All evidence points to independent lines of early development of the two styles. (One indication of this is the austerity of early leather photographs when juxtaposed with contemporary American Fetish material or classical European Fetish material.) Interestingly, in a discussion with Chuck Renslow held in 1996, I mentioned the names of John Coutts and Irving Klaw, both well known among mid-century heterosexual practitioners, as well as aficionados today. Renslow indicated that he had never heard of them. Given Renslow's forty-year history as a subcultural leader in

the gay leather community, as well as a producer of erotica in the Gay Leather style, this unfamiliarity provides an indication of the historical distinctiveness of the social networks underlying the two styles.

Formal organizational context and stylistic content. A key difference between the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles is in the composition of fetishistic costume. As discussed in chapters two through four above, eclecticism in fetishistic costume, which is linked to the bizarre aesthetic, is a core characteristic of the European Fetish and American Fetish styles. In contrast, the leather “uniform” of the Gay Leather style during the period of this dissertation was relatively narrow and homogenized, and emphasized a standardized set of components such as leather motorcycle jackets, boots, wide belts, chaps, etc.. On this criterion and others, the formal organizational contexts in which the styles were produced had a strong influence on the conventions of the styles.

Although shared by both the European Fetish and American Fetish styles, diversity in fetishistic costume cannot be fully explained in terms of a simple transmission of stylistic precedents. The organizational, specifically commercial, context in which the American Fetish style developed encouraged diversity in practices, representations, and costume—within the constraints imposed by contemporary legal and market conditions. Direct input from practitioner-customers, and the on-going need for marketable new material, produced a strong economic incentive for erotica producers to elaborate topics and products. This was the case for artist-producers such as Coutts, as well as commercial pornographers such as Eddie Mishkin. The result is the wide variety of costume and particular predilections that are evident in the works of mid-century American Fetish erotica producers, which run a gamut from transvestite female domination to bondage to specialized fetishes such as high-

heels and stockings. Such topics were engaged in specialized products, such as Klaw's diverse portfolio of films and booklets, many of which focused on particular predilections. They were also frequently combined in particular publications, in order to enhance market coverage and appeal of a given product—as was the case in virtually every publication issued by Leonard Burtman.

The very different social-organization contexts in which the Gay Leather style emerged helps to explain the comparative homogeneity of the style. Motorcycle leather, when appropriated as a subcultural motif by butch gay men during the 1950's, became a symbolic marker of membership in a stigmatized sexual group. Quite literally, the Gay Leather style developed as the “uniform” of a distinct subculture. Early mass media products such as *The Wild One* facilitated the promulgation of the style; however, early subcultural transmission and development of the Gay Leather style was primarily through face-to-face contacts in the organizational contexts of bars and motorcycle clubs. In these settings stylistic expression was internally policed through a number of practices—such as formalized, “strict,” “old guard” dress codes—that were actively enforced in gay leather organizations such as leather bars (cf. Baldwin 1993; Rubin 1994). As noted above, conformity to a relatively narrow set of stylistic conventions was required, in settings such as leather bars, even to enter the front door. The membership and boundary-marking function of the leather uniform, concretely manifested as a set of practices (conventions) enforced in distinctive organizations associated with the Gay Leather style, contributed very decisively to the relatively narrow and homogenized conventions of the early style. The public meeting places and internal policing found in the Gay Leather style had no counterpart in heterosexual social circles of the American Fetish style.

The legal environment [box 4]. As reflected in the degree of attention devoted to this topic in the preceding analysis, the most significant structural constraint on the development, distribution, and popularization of SM styles was the legal environment. For producers in the American Fetish style, the possibility of police prosecution was an ever-present reality through the mid-1960's. This led to self-censorship by all erotica producers discussed in this dissertation. Through the 1960's, the legal environment became increasingly permissive, as highlighted in the contrasting cases of Klaw and Burtman (both of whom experienced police persecution on grounds of obscenity in the 1950's and 1960's). Klaw ceased production of fetishistic material in 1964, as a result of legal prosecution, but Burtman continued to produce material throughout the period covered in this dissertation. Changes in the content of Burtman publications from the mid-1960's illustrate the cascading effects of changes in the legal environment. Later Burtman publications were characterized by increasing explicitness (e.g., nudity) and decreasing innovation, as a pattern of recycled conventions and material emerged in publications issued under the influence of Reuben Sturman. These shifts reflected dramatic changes in the pornography market by the end of the decade.

To elaborate this point, prior to the mid-1960's the difficulties inherent in the production of fetishistic erotica, ranging from inevitable legal problems to practical issues such as the need for subcultural contacts in order to obtain customized fetishistic clothing, made the market unattractive to all but a handful of well-positioned, committed producers. By the late 1960's, in the aftermath of key Supreme Court decisions such as *Manual v. Day* in 1963, and the "Fanny Hill" decision of 1966, as well as the increasing availability and fashion chic of radical and fetishistic clothing, such difficulties had basically disappeared. Accompanying this was a tremendous expansion not only of the

fetish and SM pornography business, but also of fetishistic representations in popular culture and mainstream fashion.

While a rich period of appropriation and experimentation in popular culture, as subcultural motifs were appropriated in mainstream culture, in aesthetic terms the late 1960's and 1970's were an especially bleak period in the history of fetishistic erotica. During this period the pornography industry expanded and became dominated by publications filled with cheesy material mass-produced for an audience that evidently was assumed to be indiscriminating. This is largely due to the influence of new producers who had little or no contact with antecedents in the early American Fetish style, including big-business, non-practitioner pornographer-distributors such as Reuben Sturman. Although a number of intertwining influences were involved in this process, as elaborated in the preceding analysis, changes in the legal environment most directly facilitated these stylistic and market developments.

In the Gay Leather style, differences in the nature and social-organizational foundation of the style led to different forms of legal constraints. Here police concern was focused on homosexuality, rather than fetishistic content per se. This is reflected in, for example, the Post Office focus on homoerotic aspects of Kris Studio erotica, which also contained highly fetishistic content from the early 1960's. Although social control agencies attacked producers of Gay Leather erotica, police attacks on leather bars and general prosecution of homosexuals were the key features of legal constraints in the Gay Leather style.

Distribution systems and technology [box 5, 6]. As outlined in the preceding discussion, there were four key distribution systems that were involved in the promulgation of SM styles in the mid-twentieth century. They were (1) erotica; (2) mass-media, popular culture products (e.g., cheesecake magazines, films

such as *The Wild One* and *Satan in High Heels*, and later TV shows such as *The Avengers*); (3) public contacts among practitioners in the context of bars and clubs in the Gay Leather style; and (4) fashion, at the level of both haute couture design and popular clothing. With different timelines, audiences, and structural features, each contributed in significant ways to the development and promulgation of SM styles. In general, as distribution systems for fetishistic products diversified and expanded, conventions of the American Fetish and Gay Leather styles both standardized and reached a broader, popular culture audience.

As discussed in chapter five, technological changes contributed to the diversification of distribution systems, by permitting economical manufacture of “hard media” clothing suitable for fetishistic interest and design, such as leather and PVC.

Implications for the sociology of culture

To briefly note theoretical implications of this study that will be of interest to sociologists of culture and sexuality, the preceding analysis makes two key theoretical contributions to the sociology of culture and sexuality. Both involve extensions of existing sociology of culture frameworks into the domain of sexuality. The first is the conceptualization of historical sexual categories and subcultures in terms of cultural style. The second is the specification of a production-of-culture approach to the historical explanation of sexual style.

In recent years the notion of *style* has experienced considerable development in the sociology of culture literature—particularly in theoretical and empirical studies that link culture to social structure via style. In various

formulations, style is conceptualized in terms of group specific practices, taste, lifestyles, habitus, etc.. Swidler's (1986) formulation is representative. Swidler frames the influence of culture on social action in terms of "strategies of action," which are composed of cultural resources, prominently including "style or a set of skills and habits" (Swidler 1986, p. 275). These constitute practices and worldviews of particular social groups, and also provide resources for the development of future styles and variants. This general approach, in which cultural attributes and practices are employed to define social groups and explain patterns of social action, has been used in reference to racial and ethnic groups (Hannerz 1969, MacLeod 1987), professions (Brain 1989), and socioeconomic classes (Bourdieu [1979] 1984, Lamont and Fournier 1992, Willis 1977). In the current literature, this approach has not been developed in the substantive area of sexuality or sexual subcultures.

My analysis extends this general approach to the sociology of sexuality. I have distinguished sexual subcultures on grounds of subcultural style, and indicated paths through which the style, conceptualized as a set of distinctive conventions (i.e. practices), developed within subcultural contexts and was later appropriated in popular culture contexts.

Similarly, the production of culture frame employed here has previously been used in historical explanations of the development of style in the sociology of art (Crane 1987, Rosenblum 1978), but not in the sociology of sexuality. The framework is appropriate for engaging a phenomenon with the historical characteristics of SM and fetishistic style. Like many other late twentieth-century cultural phenomena, SM and fetishistic styles are modern, disseminated in large part through the mass media, linked in their genesis to identifiable individual producers who served as creative agents, and intricately connected with structural conditions faced by other producers of cultural

products, such as technologies, legal constraints, and market conditions. These features cover the spectrum from individual to collective, and demand attention to issues of agency, structure, and mediating processes.

The production-of-culture approach is agent-centered—as noted by Peterson, an axiom of the production-of-culture frame is the assumption that cultural products are “made somewhere by someone” (p. 20 above). As clearly reflected in the production-of-culture literature on style, the analytical locations of primary interest are local sites of cultural production and the activities of producers. However, the frame is sensitive to the impact of structural conditions on local, organizationally-mediated practices. For example, Rosenblum focused on the local sites where photographic style is produced, ranging from artists’ studios to newspaper organizations. These local sites were linked to larger structures in which producers were embedded, and which they took into consideration in the course of their activities. Crane focused on local social and organizational networks through which styles in avant-garde art developed, a process rich with individual creative agency, but also engaged broader structural conditions that affected this process, such as historical shifts in institutional support for fine art.

Similarly, in this analysis I identified key sites of production where the conventions of SM and fetishistic styles were created, and focused on key producers (creative agents), associated social networks, and key structural forces that directly impacted them, such as changes in the legal environment. This is an appropriate strategy in a domain where reductionistic explanatory strategies can be appealing—in forms both individualistic (e.g., an historical approach focusing on the “heroic” attributes of the individual artist) and structural (where individual agency is discounted in favor of explanations focused on social-organizational conditions or processes). The production of

culture approach employed in this analysis of the historical development of sexual style provides a balance between agent-centered and structural explanatory strategies, always maintaining contact with local empirical sites where cultural phenomena of interest were created. In the end, such contact is essential to understand and explain an historical phenomenon rich with individual agency and structural complexity, such as the development of SM and fetishistic style.

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Oral Histories

Interviews conducted by Robert Bienvenu

Interviewee	Date	Location
Constance, Marie	22 January 1997	Upper Montclair, NJ
DeBlase, Dr. Anthony	28 May 1996	Chicago, IL
Gebhard, Dr. Paul	12 August 1996	Bloomington, IN
Klein, Yogi (a)	27 January 1996	Chicago, IL
Klein, Yogi (b)	8 May 1996	Chicago, IL
Klein, Yogi (c)	27-28 May 1997	Bloomington, IN
Monte-Levy, Herbert (a)	15 January 1997	New York, NY
Monte-Levy, Herbert (b)	21 January 1997	New York, NY
Renslow, Chuck (a)	25 January 1996	Chicago, IL
Renslow, Chuck (b)	30 August 1996	Chicago, IL
Rund, J.B.	24 February 1996	New York, NY
Vasta, Joseph and J.B. Rund	16 January 1997	New York, NY

Oral history collection, Leather Archives and Museum

(Rinella interviews © Chuck Renslow; courtesy of Chuck Renslow and Jack Rinella)

Interviewee	Interviewer	Date	Location
Olson, Frank	Jack Rinella	27 June 1994	New York, NY
Orejudos, Dom	George Busse	no date	probably Chicago
Renslow, Chuck	Jack Rinella	14 June 1994	Chicago, IL
Renslow, Chuck	George	February 1987	Chicago, IL
Renslow, Patrick Finnegan	Jack Rinella	27 December 1994	unknown
Steward, Samuel	Gregory Sprague	20 May 1982	Berkeley, CA
Steward, Samuel	Len Evans	2 July 1983	Berkeley, CA

Other Interviews

Interviewee	Interviewer	Date	Location
Burtman, Leonard and Herbert Monte-Levy. (Courtesy of Herbert Monte-Levy. Transcribed, edited and deposited at the Kinsey Institute by Robert Bienvenu)	Life Magazine (Ms. Howard)	24 January 1964	New York, NY
Coutts, John Alexander Scott (JASC). Held at KIRSGR.	Dr. Fred Shannon	Dec. 1961-Jan 1962	Wickenburg, AZ
GMSMA 1982 — Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA) General Meeting, Program on “SM in New York City in the 1950’s.” (Courtesy of GMSMA and Gayle Rubin)		21 April 1982	New York, NY
Milne, Bob (Courtesy of Gayle Rubin)	Gayle Rubin	6 October 1979	New York, NY
Renslow, Chuck (Courtesy of Gayle Rubin, held at LA&M)	Gayle Rubin	25 July 1991	Chicago, IL

Appendices

Appendix One: Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (KIRSGR)—Finding Aid Supplement

The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (KIRSGR) is an indispensable resource for scholars conducting research on fetishism and sadomasochism. The two key “finding aids” for Institute materials in these areas are the Kinsey Institute’s Online Public Access Catalog (KICAT), accessible via the Internet (www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/library.html), and my *Finding Aid for SM and Fetish Material Held at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction*, available at the Institute. In this appendix I briefly highlight information not found in either of these finding aid resources.

1) KIRSGR Vertical File Categories

The vertical file (VF) of the Kinsey Institute library has a number of folders that contain historical information about fetishism and SM. Vertical file content includes publishers’ ephemera, Institute for Sex Research staff notes, newspaper and magazine articles, newsletters, flyers, and other miscellaneous documents. The folders listed below were directly relevant to this dissertation. The contents of many of these folders are described in my *Finding Aid for SM and Fetish Material Held at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction*.

This list does not exhaust all possible VF locations where germane material may be found. See the Institute’s vertical file card catalog for other categories.

Censorship — 1940 - 1959
Censorship (New York)
Censorship Cases — Post Office
Censorship Organizations — Citizens for Decent Literature, Inc.
*** see other Censorship folders
Correspondence Clubs — Biz-zarre
Correspondence Clubs — Clique
Correspondence Clubs — Exotica
Correspondence Clubs — La Plume
Erotica Producers (United States) (20th Century) — American Ethnological Press
Homosexual Organizations — A Taste of Leather
Homosexual Publications — Black and Blue
Homosexual Publications — SMads
Homosexual Sadomasochism
Homosexual Sadomasochism (female)
Homosexual Sadomasochism (female) — SAMOIS
Photographic Erotica Producers (female) (France) (20th Century)—Richard, Yva
Sade, Marquis de
Sadism

Sadomasochism
 Sadomasochism Bibliographies
 Sadomasochistic Fetishism — Trail Hill Case [Note: Located in VF but not indexed in card catalog]
 Sadomasochism in Art
 Sadomasochism in Cinema
 Sadomasochism in Theater
 Sadomasochism Organizations
 Sadomasochism Organizations — Discipline Club
 Sadomasochism Organizations — Eulenspiegel Society
 Sadomasochism Organizations — Impleat Forum
 Sadomasochism Organizations — Society of Madame Brownrigg
 Sadomasochism Devices
 Sadomasochism Publications
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (England) (20th Century 1960-)
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (England) (20th Century 1980-) Atomage
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-1979)
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) Uncle Sam Umbrella Shop
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-1999)
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) Centurians
 Sadomasochistic Devices Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-1999) Centurian
 Sadomasochistic Erotica
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (Canada) (20th Century 1960-1979)
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (France) (20th Century)
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (France) (20th Century) Livre D'efendu
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-1979)
 [Folder 1 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-1979)
 [Folder 2 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-)
 [Folder 1 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-)
 [Folder 2 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-1999)
 [Folder 1 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-1999)
 [Folder 2 of 2]
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Naboma Co.
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Southern Book Sales
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) — Connoisseur
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Dougebear
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1980-1999) — House of Milan
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) — King Enterprises
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Dealers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) — Waron Books
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (Canada) (20th Century 1960-) — Gordons
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (Fed. Rep. of Germany) (20th Century 1960-)
 Export Service
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (France) (20th Century) — Librairie General
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Burmel
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Coutts; John Willie
 Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Gargoyle Press

Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Klaw, Irving [four folders]
Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Spencer, Dorothy
Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-1979)
Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century 1960-) — Flag Publications
Sadomasochistic Erotica Producers (U.S.) (20th Century) — Friendship Photographic Studios
Sadomasochistic Prostitution
Sadomasochistic Prostitution — Cleef, Monique Von

VF Serials

Eulenspiegel Society Newsletter
Power Exchange
Stand Corrected
Dungeonmaster [Note: 1979-1985, see the 540 section of the magazine collection for later issues]

2) Uncataloged SM and Fetish Publications held by the KIRSGR library

The Kinsey Institute library holds several thousand magazines that are germane to historical studies of SM and fetishism. As of February 1998, this collection is physically and chronologically segmented. SM publications from approximately 1970 to the present are located in the 540 section of the “magazine room.” A very important sub-collection of materials dating from 1909 through the 1960’s is found in the library stacks. Although retrospective cataloging work is underway, most of this material is not yet incorporated into KICAT, the Institute’s electronic library catalog.

Works by producers addressed in this dissertation are found primarily in the set of early materials located in the library stacks. Detailed information about these early publications, including an annotated index of publications by Klaw, Burtman, and others, is found in my *Finding Aid for SM and Fetish Material Held at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction*. Here I provide additional information that will be useful to scholars: a list of issues of *Photo Bits* and *London Life* magazines held by the Kinsey Institute library, and a list of known corporate titles used in products (1954-1971) of American Fetish producer Leonard Burtman.

Photo Bits magazine, 1909-1911

Jun 26, 1909	Mar 5, 1910	Sep 24, 1910	Mar 4, 1911
Jul 3, 1909	Apr 23, 1910	Oct 1, 1910	Mar 11, 1911
Jul 10, 1909	Apr 30, 1910	Oct 15, 1910	Mar 18, 1911
Jul 17, 1909	May 7, 1910	Oct 22, 1910	Mar 25, 1911
Jul 24, 1909	May 14, 1910	Oct 29, 1910	Apr 1, 1911
Jul 31, 1909	May 21, 1910	Nov 5, 1910	Apr 8, 1911
Aug 7, 1909	May 28, 1910	Nov 12, 1910	Apr 15, 1911
Aug 11, 1909	Jun 4, 1910	Nov 19, 1910	Apr 22, 1911
Aug 14, 1909	Jun 11, 1910	Nov 26, 1910	Apr 29, 1911
Aug 28, 1909	Jun 18, 1910	Dec 3, 1910	May 6, 1911
Sep 4, 1909	Jun 25, 1910	Dec 10, 1910	May 13, 1911
Dec 18, 1909	Jul 2, 1910	Dec 17, 1910	May 20, 1911
Dec 25, 1909	Jul 9, 1910	Dec 24, 1910	May 27, 1911
	Jul 16, 1910	Dec 31, 1910	Jun 3, 1911
Jan 1, 1910	Jul 23, 1910		Jun 11, 1911
Jan 8, 1910	Jul 30, 1910	Jan 7, 1911	Jun 17, 1911
Jan 15, 1910	Aug 6, 1910	Jan 14, 1911	Jun 24, 1911
Jan 22, 1910	Aug 13, 1910	Jan 21, 1911	Jul 1, 1911
Jan 29, 1910	Aug 20, 1910	Jan 28, 1911	Oct 21, 1911
Feb 5, 1910	Aug 27, 1910	Feb 4, 1911	Nov 12, 1911
Feb 12, 1910	Sep 3, 1910	Feb 11, 1911	Dec 9, 1911
Feb 19, 1910	Sep 10, 1910	Feb 18, 1911	Dec 16, 1911
Feb 26, 1910	Sep 17, 1910	Feb 25, 1911	Dec 25, 1911
			Dec 30, 1911

London Life magazine: 1927-1940

Feb 5, 1927	Aug 8, 1931	Aug 18, 1934	May 23, 1936	Jun 4, 1938
Feb 12, 1927	Aug 29, 1931	Sep 1, 1934	May 30, 1936	Jun 11, 1938
Oct 15, 1927	Sep 5, 1931	Sep 8, 1934	Jun 20, 1936	Jun 18, 1938
Dec 12, 1927	Sep 26, 1931	Sep 15, 1934	Jul 4, 1936	Jun 25, 1938
	Oct 10, 1931	Sep 22, 1934	Jul 11, 1936	Jul 2, 1938
Feb 11, 1928	Nov 14, 1931	Sep 29, 1934	Jul 18, 1936	Jul 9, 1938
Mar 17, 1928	Nov 28, 1931	Oct 6, 1934	Jul 25, 1936	Sep 24, 1938
Apr 7, 1928	Dec 12, 1931	Oct 13, 1934	Aug 1, 1936	Oct 8, 1938
May 12, 1928		Oct 20, 1934	Aug 8, 1936	Oct 22, 1938
Jul 7, 1928	Bound 1932	Oct 27, 1934	Aug 15, 1936	Nov 26, 1938
Jul 21, 1928	volume	Nov 3, 1934	Aug 22, 1936	Dec 10, 1938
Sep 22, 1928	Single 1932	Nov 10, 1934	Aug 29, 1936	
Nov 3, 1928	issues:	Nov 17, 1934	Sep 5, 1936	Jan 29, 1939
	Mar 5, 1932	Dec 22, 1934	Sep 12, 1936	Feb 11, 1939
Jan 5, 1929	May 21, 1932		Sep 19, 1936	Mar 11, 1939
Mar 2, 1929	Sep 3, 1932	Jan 5, 1935	Sep 26, 1936	Apr 8, 1939
Mar 16, 1929	Sep 17, 1932	Jan 12, 1935	Oct 17, 1936	May 20, 1939
Apr 6, 1929	Sep 24, 1932	Jan 26, 1935	Oct 31, 1936	Jul 29, 1939
Jun 22, 1929	Dec 3, 1932	Feb 23, 1935	Nov 7, 1936	Aug 19, 1939
Aug 10, 1929		Mar 9, 1935	Nov 14, 1936	Sep 16, 1939
	Apr 4, 1933	Apr 1, 1935	Nov 21, 1936	Dec 23, 1939
Feb 8, 1930	Apr 15, 1933	Apr 13, 1935	Dec 5, 1936	
Feb 15, 1930	Apr 22, 1933	May 11, 1935	Dec 12, 1936	Aug 10, 1940
Mar 15, 1930	May 6, 1933	Jun 1, 1935	Dec 21, 1936	
Mar 22, 1930	May 13, 1933	Jul 13, 1935	Dec 26, 1936	May 11, 19??
Apr 5, 1930	May 20, 1933	Jul 27, 1935		
Jun 21, 1930	Jun 3, 1933	Aug 10, 1935	Jan 9, 1937	
Jun 28, 1930	Jun 17, 1933	Aug 17, 1935	Jan 16, 1937	
Jul 5, 1930	Jul 1, 1933	Aug 24, 1935	Mar 6, 1937	
Aug 2, 1930	Jul 8, 1933	Sep 12, 1935	Mar 27, 1937	
Aug 30, 1930	Aug 12, 1933	Oct 12, 1935	May 29, 1937	
Sep 27, 1930	Aug 19, 1933	Oct 26, 1935	Jun 12, 1937	
Oct 4, 1930	Sep 12, 1933	Nov 2, 1935	Jun 19, 1937	
Oct 18, 1930	Sep 16, 1933	Nov 23, 1935	Jul 3, 1937	
Nov 1, 1930	Sep 21, 1933	Dec 9, 1935	Jul 24, 1937	
Dec 6, 1930	Oct 7, 1933	Dec 14, 1935	Sep 18, 1937	
	Nov 18, 1933	Dec 21, 1935	Oct 16, 1937	
Jan 3, 1931	Dec 16, 1933	Dec 28, 1935	Dec 23, 1937	
Jan 31, 1931			Dec 25, 1937	
Mar 14, 1931	Jan 6, 1934	Jan 4, 1936		
Apr 2, 1931	Feb 3, 1934	Feb 15, 1936	Jan 1, 1938	
May 9, 1931	Mar 3, 1934	Feb 29, 1936	Jan 15, 1938	
May 23, 1931	Mar 24, 1934	Mar 7, 1936	Feb 5, 1938	
May 30, 1931	Apr 7, 1934	Mar 28, 1936	Mar 5, 1938	
Jun 6, 1931	Apr 28, 1934	Apr 4, 1936	Apr 2, 1938	
Jun 20, 1931	Jul 7, 1934	Apr 18, 1936	Apr 9, 1938	
Jul 11, 1931	Aug 11, 1934	Apr 25, 1936	Apr 23, 1938	

Known Corporate Titles: Leonard Burtman and Associates (1954-1971)

Publications by Leonard Burtman and his associates cite a number of corporate titles, only some of which were real legal entities. Selbee Associates Inc., for example, was formally incorporated in the State of New York on July 14, 1960. Others, such as Tana and Mara Costumes, have no known corporate existence.

This diversity in producer self-identification, combined with plagiarism and stylistic similarity found among producers during the mid-1950's to mid-1960's period, complicates the task of positively identifying Burtman publications. The list below summarizes known corporate titles used by Burtman, and applicable dates. The KIRSGR library holds over one hundred publications by Leonard Burtman and his associates.

Cited Corporate Title	Year
Exotica Publishing Co.	1954
Burmel Publishing Company, Inc.	1955-1958
TL Publications	1957
B and B Press	1958
Benlen Press	1958
Hudson Press	1958
Manhay Publications	1958
P.B. Publishing	1958
Raven Publishing Co.	1958
Tana Louise	1958
Pigalle Imports, Inc.	1959
Kaysey Sales Company, Inc.	1959-1966
Benley Photos	1960
Crown Photos	1960
Libby Jones, Inc.	1960
Selbee Associates, Inc.	1960-1963
Vega Productions	1961
Epic Publishing, Inc.	1961-1971
Tana and Mara Costumes	1963
Ben-Lee Enterprises, Inc.	1964
S-K Publishers	1964
Penetrex Industries	1965
Unique Publications, LTD.	1966
Bilife Publications, Inc.	1966-1968
Bizeincorp, Inc.	1968
Pacific Coast Distributors	1969
Consolidated Publishing, Inc.	1969-1971
Chelsea Productions, Inc.	1970

3) KIRSGR Photography Collection

The Photography Collection of the Kinsey Institute for Sex, Gender, and Reproduction is a key resource for scholars of fetishism and sadomasochism. From the late 1940's through the 1960's, the Institute for Sex Research staff had remarkable success in locating sources of SM and fetish photographs. In particular, early American producers such as Charles Guyette and John Coutts are well represented in the photography collection.

Photographs in the collection are organized by thematic category, such as *fetish*, and then by the object, physical position, or activity of the models. Within a particular category, such as "Fetish Boot," photographs are grouped chronologically. Occasionally, significant producers are placed in a separate sub-category—as in the case of John Coutts. Individual photographs are numbered in series and mounted on acid-free boards in archival boxes.

For example, the category "Fetish Corset and Shoe: 1928-1950" is located in a box that contains mounted photographs depicting these fetish objects. The researcher will find that the box contains photographs numbered 46501 through 46614, which have producer attributions written on the mounting boards. Researchers who investigate a particular category are presented with one or more such archival boxes.

For researchers focusing on the history of fetishism and sadomasochism, this system has two key disadvantages. First, because with few exceptions the collection is organized by depicted object or act rather than producer, researchers interested in particular producers or periods must examine hundreds of photographs across all possible categories to locate germane materials. In addition, this classificatory system separates photographs that were associated when originally produced. For example, photographs originally produced in a single studio session and sold as a set are often in different physical locations in the collection, without cross-references. Such relationships must be reconstructed by the researcher, a time-consuming task that requires meticulous tracking and some luck.

Second, many producer attributions in the Fetish and SM categories are incorrect. It is very likely that these attribution errors occurred when the materials were originally accessioned into the collection. Unfortunately, although some corrective work has been done, misattribution remains a problem within these categories. The European Fetish Photograph Producer Identification Guide below (Appendix Two) can be used as a tool to help sort out suspicious or contradictory producer attributions found in the collection.

Despite these issues, the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction has a profoundly important collection of historical SM and fetish photographs. To facilitate the planning of scholars who may use the collection, the list below summarizes key SM and fetish categories, and nomenclature used, in the KIRSGR photography collection.

Photography Collection:

SM main categories

SDM Documentary
SDM Coutts
SDM Series
SDM & Sex
SDM ♀ BNDG FT
SDM ♀ FLAG A
SDM ♀ FLAG P
SDM ♀ BNDG GAG
SDM ♀ BNDG HND
SDM ♀ BR
SDM ♀ OTHER
SDM ♀ ON ♀
SDM ♀ ON ♀ BNDG
SDM ♀ ON ♀ BNDG & FLAG
SDM ♀ ON ♀ BOX
SDM ♀ ON ♀ FLAG
SDM ♀ ON ♀ WRSTL
SDM ♀ ON ♂
SDM ♂
SDM ♂ ON ♀
SDM ♂ ON ♀ BR
SDM ♂ ON ♀ SPANK
SDM ♂ ON ♂

FETISH main categories

Fetish
Fetish Boot
Fetish Boot & Glove
Fetish-Boot Shoe; Boot & Shoe Glove
Fetish Corset
Fetish Corset & Shoe
Fetish Corset & Shoe & Glove
Fetish Corset & Other
Fetish Costume
Fetish Glove
Fetish Hair
Fetish Shoe Close: ND
Fetish - Shoe, Kneel, Other, Prone,
Side, Stoop
Fetish Shoe Sit
Fetish Shoe Stand
Fetish Shoe - 2 ♀
Fetish Shoe - Stand-Kneel, Supine
Fetish Shoe & Glove

GLOSSARY:

♀	Female
♂	Male
A	Active
BNDG	Bondage
BOX	Boxing
BR	Breast
CLOSE	Close-up view
FLAG	Flagellation
FT	Foot
HND	Hand
ND	Not dated
P	Passive
SDM	Sadomasochism
WRSTL	Wrestling

Appendix Two: European Fetish Photograph Producer Identification Guide—France prior to World War II

I. Studio Biederer

There are two known commercial sellers of fetishistic and sadomasochistic photography in France prior to the second World War: *Yva Richard* and *Diana Slip*. Both companies resold photographs that were produced by external studios. A key external source for both of these merchants was *Studio Biederer* of Paris (cf. Dupouy 1994, p. 61).

IDENTIFICATION:

There are two distinctive rugs that appear in many French photographs. These rugs are associated with Studio Biederer.



Figure 168: Close-up of French rug #1, associated with Studio Biederer.

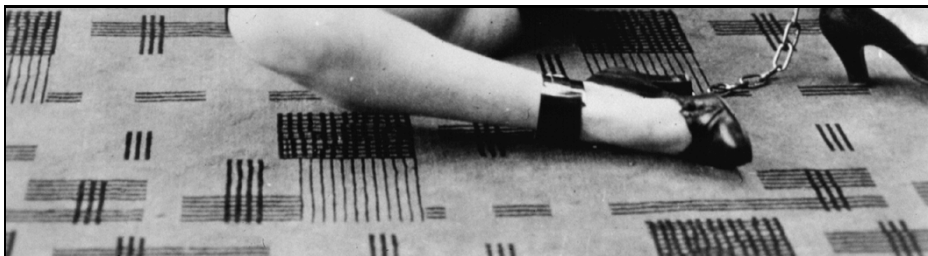


Figure 170: Close-up of French rug #2, associated with Studio Biederer.



Figure 167: Full photo of French rug #1—associated with Studio Biederer (KIRSGR)



Figure 169: Full photo of French rug #2—associated with Studio Biederer (KIRSGR).



Figure 172: Close-up of floor pattern #1 associated with Studio Biederer.

There is also a circular staircase and two distinctive floor patterns associated with Studio Biederer. Floor pattern #1 is pictured on this page, both with the staircase and in a photograph taken in another location. Floor pattern #2 is on the next page.

Variants of the "B" symbol pictured to the right as also associated with Studio Biederer.



Figure 171: Circular staircase associated with Studio Biederer. Note floor pattern. (Dupouy 1994)



Figure 173: Full photo of floor pattern #1 associated with Studio Biederer (KIRSGR).



Figure 174: Close-up of "B" symbol with triangle (hand-written form) associated with Studio Biederer.



Figure 175: Close-up of second "B" symbol associated with Studio Biederer.



“Ostra” is a label that appears on many photographs that have physical features associated with Studio Biederer. While no official record of “Ostra” has been found, Studio Biederer was a registered photography studio in Paris. The working hypothesis of experts Alexandre Dupouy and Joseph Vasta is that Studio Biederer and Ostra photographs were created by the same producers.

The photograph to the right shows French floor pattern #2, associated with Studio Biederer. This (tile?) pattern is difficult to discern in low quality reproductions.

The enhanced, negative image below highlights the repeating shapes that distinguish floor pattern #2.

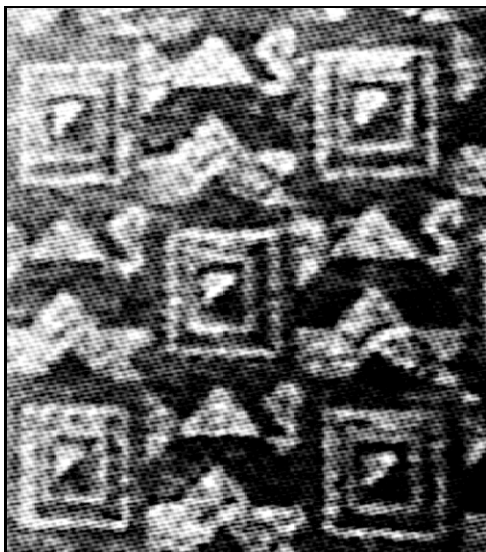


Figure 176: Enhanced, negative close-up of Biederer floor pattern #2.



Figure 177: French floor pattern #2, associated with Studio Biederer (Nazarieff 1992).



Figure 178: Nativia of Yva Richard. Note the "Y.R." label (Dupouy 1994)

II. Yva Richard

The most distinctive feature of Yva Richard photographs is Nativia herself, modeling the husband-wife team's products (cf. above p. 57-61). There is also a distinctive "Y.R." label that appears on some Yva Richard photographs, in both printed and handwritten forms.



Figure 179: Printed "Y.R." label attached to photograph (Bélier Press)



Figure 181: Nativia of Yva Richard in fetishistic metal costume (KIRSGR)

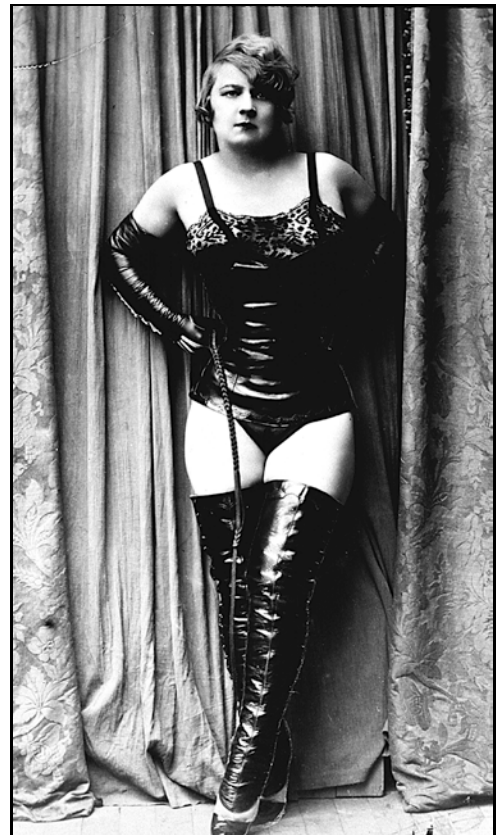


Figure 180: Nativia of Yva Richard in fetishistic leather costume (KIRSGR)

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VERSION NOTES

31 July 2005

Version	Date	Identifying Features	Notes
1	28 February 1998	Titlepage labeled "March 1998"	Dissertation as defended and submitted to the Indiana University (IU) Graduate School in February 1998. Two hardbound copies provided to IU (for the IU library and Dept. of Sociology); unbound copy forwarded to University Microfilms International (UMI).
2	14 February 1999	Titlepage labeled "February 1998"	Printed from Adobe Acrobat file. Font conversion produced minor changes in pagination from version 1. The following supplemental sections included: Acknowledgements, Appendices, Index, Version Notes. Front material updated (pgs. i-xvii). Noted errors corrected in text, list of attributions, reference section.
2.1	1 June 1999	Titlepage labeled "February 1998 (2.1)"	Audio interview content added to the Acrobat file.
2.1b	5 December 1999	Titlepage labeled "February 1998 (2.1b)"	New material added: German, French, and Spanish abstracts; graphical startup page; summary of multimedia content. CD version distributed beginning in February 2000.
2.1c	8 April 2001	Titlepage labeled "February 1998 (2.1c)"	Version 2.1b with audio content and Acrobat external index removed. This smaller file was optimized for internet transfer. Removed from internet distribution on 12 May 2005.
2.1d	12 May 2005	2.1d	Version 2.1b re-optimized for Adobe Acrobat version 7 to further reduce file size. Removed from internet distribution on 18 July 2005.
2.2	18 July 2005; 31 July 2005	2.2 2.2a Version and date noted in document properties	Version 2.1b re-optimized to version 2.2. No index; 160 MB. Version 2.1b re-optimized to version 2.2a. No multimedia content; 24 MB size. Both files require Acrobat 6 or higher (PDF 1.5); accessibility enabled; minor updates to front and end material. Files recompiled on 31 July 2005 to correct postscript error discovered on dissertation page 49. "This page intentionally blank" pages added to facilitate duplex printing.

NOTES:

- No substantive change has been made to the core text (p. 1-287) approved by the dissertation committee in February 1998. Minor errors are corrected where noted beginning in version 2.
- The dissertation was written in Microsoft Word for Macintosh version 6.0.1. In July 1998, the manuscript was initially converted to Adobe Acrobat 3.0.1 PDF format. Technical and font copyright issues associated with electronic distribution via Acrobat required that new fonts be assigned to the manuscript. This resulted in minor reformatting of the document (version 2) and was completed in February 1999. Primary fonts used in version 1 are Apple TrueType fonts Palatino and Avant Garde. Primary fonts in version 2 are Adobe Type 1 Postscript fonts Caslon 224 and Formata.
- Software used in the construction of this dissertation includes: Adobe Photoshop 4.0, Adobe Illustrator 8.0 (photographs and graphics); Filemaker Pro 4.0 (database); Pro-Cite 4.0.1 (bibliography); SoundEdit 16 v. 2 (sound); Adaptec Toast 3.5.4 (CD-ROM creation); Claris Impact 2.0 (flowcharts). All were used on a Macintosh PowerPC system.
- Bienvenu consultants included in multimedia excerpts provided formal consent to authorize this use in 1999.

Summary of Multimedia Content (CD v. 2.1b)

Page # Paper (Acrobat)	Form	Reference	Topic
60 (81)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Joseph Vasta, New York City, 16 January 1997.	Problems associated with identifying sources of classical French erotic photographs.
67 (88)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Joseph Vasta, New York City, 16 January 1997.	Note regarding early German SM/fetish material.
68 (89)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Joseph Vasta, New York City, 16 January 1997.	Scarcity of classical German SM/fetish erotica in France, and vice versa.
74 (95)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with J.B. Rund, New York City, 24 February 1996.	Initial 1930's contact between German producers and Charles Guyette, the first producer in the American Fetish Style.
80 (101)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Joseph Vasta and J.B. Rund, New York City, 16 January 1997.	<i>Film Fun</i> magazine, explicitness of 1930's American cheesecake genre.
171 (192)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, Chicago, 27 January 1996.	Ben Himmel, business associate of Leonard Burtman.
173 (194)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, Bloomington, IN, 27-28 May 1997.	Professional commitment, demeanor of Leonard Burtman.
204 (225)	Audio	Burtman Life Magazine Interview, New York City, 24 January 1964.	The "fetish market" in 1964.
204 (225)	Audio	Burtman Life Magazine Interview, New York City, 24 January 1964.	1963-64 police crackdown on obscenity in New York City.
208 (229)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, Chicago, May 8, 1996.	Early House of Milan products
209 (230)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, Chicago, May 8, 1986.	Burtman catalog used as initial House of Milan catalog.
209 (230)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Yogi Klein, Bloomington, IN, 27-28 May 1997.	"Oscar," an initial producer for House of Milan.
227 (248)	Audio	Gregory Sprague interview with Samuel Steward (LA&M), Berkeley, CA, 20 May 1982.	The Wild Ones and the beginning of "leather"
243 (264)	Audio	Gregory Sprague interview with Samuel Steward (LA&M), Berkeley, CA, 20 May 1982.	The gay SM scene prior to the emergence of "leather" (2 excerpts).
246 (267)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 25 January 1996.	Formation of the first leather group in Chicago; the Gold Coast leather bar.
253 (274)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 30 August 1996.	Origin of ideas for leather erotica produced by Kris Studio 1.
253 (274)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 30 August 1996.	Origin of ideas for leather erotica produced by Kris Studio 2.
254 (275)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 30 August 1996.	Distribution and prices of Kris Studio products.
256 (277)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 30 August 1996.	Props used in Kris Studio leather photographs.
258 (279)	Audio	Bienvenu interview with Chuck Renslow, Chicago, 30 August 1996.	Lack of concern by censors about SM images in Kris Studio products.

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